

# WINSTON CHURCHILL

1874—1945

*by*

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AUTHOR OF

“THE WAY OF THE DICTATORS,”  
“THE BERNARD SHAW DICTIONARY,” ETC.

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*Let all  
Who know me well, what they know freely speak  
So those (the greatest curse I meet below)  
Who know me not may not pretend to know.*

*Let none of those  
Pretending friendship to give malice weight  
Publish my life ; let no false sneaking peer  
(Some such there are) to win the public ear  
Hand me to shame with some vile anecdote . . .  
Let one sprig of bay around my head  
Bloom while I live and point me out when dead  
Let it (may Heaven indulgent grant my prayer)  
Be planted on my grave nor wither there ;  
And when on travel bound some rhyming guest  
Roams through the Churchyard whilst his dinner's  
drest  
Let it hold up this comment to his eyes—*

*Life to the last enjoyed, here Churchill lies  
Whilst (O what joy that pleasing flattery gives)  
Reading my works he cries—  
Here Churchill lives.*

CHARLES CHURCHILL, The Candidate.

## *FOREWORD TO THE 1945 EDITION*

IN submitting to the public a new edition of my life of Winston Churchill, carrying events down to his fall after the General Election, I feel I should inform the reader that the additional chapters have been written to conform with the style of the earlier work. Herein I have laboured under a certain disadvantage. It would have been simpler to have sketched events in less detail, without interpolating long quotations from the speeches. But this would have been to depart from the model I had previously set myself.

Each development in the war was marked by one of Winston Churchill's orations. In this book each chapter is built up round one of the speeches. As chief of the executive, the Prime Minister, with the co-operation of his colleagues, decides on policy and action. As leader in Parliament he expounds his policy and justifies his actions in his speeches to the House. It is as much by the effectiveness of his speeches as by the correctness of his decisions that he maintains himself in office. Had Winston Churchill been less effective as a speaker, it is to be doubted whether he would have survived some of the crises that beset his ministry.

We were privileged the other evening on the occasion of the El Alamein anniversary dinner to hear from Mr. Churchill one of the asides of history. Wearing the Africa Star, which he had received from the King, he was sitting beside Field-Marshal Montgomery, who was proposing the toast of his health as architect of victory.

"Monty" was recalling the circumstances of his appointment to the 8th Army and reminded the officers gathered about him that when he arrived in Egypt to take over the command there was a certain amount of speculation "as to how long some of you gentlemen might hold your appointments." When the laughter at this reminiscence had died away, he added, "And there was rather more speculation on how long I would hold mine."

At this he turned to Winston as if seeking confirmation. Amidst the roar of merriment that followed, Winston was heard to remark, *sotto voce*, "And still more about how long I would hold mine."

It is back in the days when political crises at Westminster gave cause to this speculation that I resume the chronicle of Winston's career. The former record ended with the Atlantic Charter meeting; the new chapters open with the outrage of Pearl Harbour and the entry of the United States in World War the Second.

During the six months following, the Allies suffered a succession of

reverses on all fronts, and the ensuing anxieties at Westminster gave rise to the political crises and successive challenges to Winston's leadership. As battles were lost in the field he was forced on his defence and had to fight them over again in debate.

It is this circumstance which invests the speeches he made with an interest that transcends the ephemeral appeal of ministerial oratory. He was the Chronicler to Parliament of the Campaigns. The story of the war is unfolded in his orations. So it is to Winston Churchill, orator and Parliamentarian, that these later pages are primarily devoted.

It is a fortunate circumstance for democracy that the gifts of oratory and ability in affairs have so frequently been found conjoined in our statesmen. Churchill is in the tradition of Pitt, Gladstone and Lloyd George.

It should be stated that this record of events contains few details which have not previously been made known. From the facts I have sought to write a straightforward narrative, and I have refrained from adding to the facts by way of speculation.

While I can claim to have preserved the impartiality of the earlier phases, I cannot persuade myself that I have maintained their emotional background. Here, I am conscious, the sequel shows a break in continuity. It would, indeed, be difficult in 1945 to recapture the emotional note of 1941.

The sequel remains true to pattern in that I have presented the figure of the national leader. The party chief makes only a fugitive appearance in the final pages.

I am only too conscious of the omissions in these pages that arise from the lack of full knowledge about the events with which they deal. In this or any similar biography there must be gaps until they are filled by the makers of history.

Winston has himself given notice of his intention to add to his chronicles of the times. To his pronouncement, when he was Prime Minister, that there was no reason why persons in unofficial positions should not compile histories of their own activities during the war, he added, "I trust I may be given the opportunity of making some interpolations of my own." It is a universal hope that he may translate expectation into achievement.

OXFORD, KENT, October, 1945.

## P R E F A C E

THIS is a biography conceived in the old-fashioned manner. It starts at the beginning and proceeds in chronological order of events. It seeks to prove no thesis, to set forth no psychological character-study. It is made up for the most part of facts—the facts of what Mr. Winston Churchill has done and what he has said—with the slightest intrusions of the opinions of the author.

To the extent that I have not tried to fit the facts to a theory, I may claim to be impartial—as impartial as any author can be, for every person who holds an opinion is to that extent biased.

This biography indeed exemplifies the triumph of fact over prejudice. When, six years or so ago, I set out to collect the material, it was then my aim to make the career of Winston Churchill a moral object-lesson for politicians. Here, as I then conceived it, was a man who had spent his lifetime in escaping from the consequences of his own errors—who by his astuteness as a politician had invariably succeeded in evading the forfeit normally claimed from the man who makes repeated blunders.

I sketched out a list of them as they were vaguely suggested by popular opinion—the failure of Antwerp, the blunder of Gallipoli, the ill-conceived campaigns against the Bolsheviks, the restoration of the Gold Standard involving the disaster of the General Strike. I meditated further on the apparent flexibility of opinions of a man who was Conservative first, then Liberal, Radical and opponent of a strong Navy, First Lord and advocate of the strongest Navy, Coalitionist, and Conservative again. Even then, returned to the Tory fold, he could not, it seemed, remain a loyal follower but must seek to work up popular prejudice against the India reforms as a means of ejecting Stanley Baldwin and seizing the Party leadership. I made ready, of course, for generous use of the verses with which pamphleteers of former generations celebrated acts of tergiversation :

*A side I chose and on that side was strong  
Till time hath proved me fairly in the wrong.  
Convinced, I changed (can any man do more)  
And have not greater patriots changed before?  
Changed I at once (can any man do less?)  
Without a single blush that change confess,  
Confess it with a manly kind of pride,  
And change the losing for the winning side.*

Honest men, I thought, should know this volatile demagogue for what he was. Politicians seeking success might learn from him how to turn defeat into triumph.

In this mind I set to work to build up my thesis. The further I investigated the more remote the thesis seemed to be. In the light of all the facts it melted away as disconcertingly as the hosts of Sennacherib.

I had started with the conception of an astute politician guilty of many errors. The errors disappeared. I was left to question the astuteness of the politician. But the figure of the patriot Minister emerged.

So, I may claim to the impartiality of a critic converted from his criticism. If the book is now written on a note of admiration it is only because the facts have compelled me.

It is a book twice the length of the average novel and yet it does not get in the whole of Winston Churchill—so extended is his career, so varied his interests, so many his contributions to the service of the State.

In the length of his career he compares with Gladstone, and even that illustrious Minister did not contrive to touch life at quite so many points. Before ever he became an M.P., Mr. Churchill had lived one career as War Correspondent and soldier. His activities as politician between 1900 and 1914 would be enough for another man's reputation. During the War and the period of the Aftermath a third career is unfolded ; there is a fourth in the Years Between ; and now as Prime Minister he has entered upon his fifth.

The range of his interests is as unlimited as his zest for life. There seems to be no exhaustion-point for his energy, physical and mental. Look at his achievements in the opening months of the last war when he was occupying the post of First Lord of the Admiralty. The Admiralty, in time of war, is scarcely a sinecure, yet Mr. Churchill contrived to undertake the Air Defence of London, inspire the invention of the tank, promote the development of the bomb, and in a week-end visit to the Continent take charge of the Defences of Antwerp.

His services to the State over four decades would have been more than sufficient to exhaust the energies of the average man, quite apart from the speeches which he has made on hundreds of occasions. At a modest estimate they number 3,000, each a finished masterpiece. Yet, in addition, he has found the time to write a full scale history of the last war, a full length biography of his father, and the monumental life of Marlborough that entailed the examination of the store of manuscript treasures at Blenheim Palace.

This vigour and versatility belong to earlier generations in our history before the accumulating influences of civilization had worn down the zest of man. Winston Churchill has all the appurtenances of the Elizabethans—their richness, their colour, their freshness. He responds to new inventions and new ideas as did the men of the Renaissance. There is the same glamour about his actions. Once at a

ball he appeared in the toga of a Roman. The doublet, cloak, ruffs and slashed hose of the Elizabethan would have been more appropriate.

This very vigour, versatility and brilliance have been his handicap. The world has aged since the Elizabethans, and man labours under his burdens. No longer do we pay honour to the man of universal mind. Rather do we suspect him. So when young Mr. Churchill's many capacities could not be disguised the denigration began. "Lacking in judgment," the stolid, stable men pronounced, and never was he able to live the judgment down. You will find it running throughout the memoirs of his time. There is no disputing his ability, his industry, his eloquence as a speaker, his skill as writer, his wit, his versatility—but, always, the soundness of his judgment is questioned.

Dogged by his brilliance, he might have concealed the fatal gift by the simulation of "wisdom, gravity and profound conceit," but humility is not one of his qualities. Like the able men in the books, he does not find it easy to humour incapacity. Pugnacity is his but not tact, or, as John Burns once told old King Edward, "He does not exactly walk about with an oil can in his hand."

These, I think, are the causes of his political failures—for as a politician he must be said to have failed more than once. It was a political failure when in 1915 he left the Admiralty. His career seemed to be a failure, again, when he lost three successive elections after he went into the Wilderness in 1922. And it was a political failure that he should have been out of office throughout the Thirties—a personal failure and a national disaster.

Brilliance, then, was his handicap. But character won him his place at the last. For his character, as the people had been able to judge it, was inexpugnable and true, and so they turned to him in the hour of crisis. Courage and integrity are his—we all know that. But he is also a highly complicated personality despite the simplicity of the essential lines. Of the men who have come in closest contact with him, few have been able to appreciate that character to the full and to set down their appreciation in words. Lord D'Abernon, who was a rare judge of men, has come nearer than the rest in catching in cold print the elusive quality of Winston Churchill. From the full-length character study in *An Ambassador of Peace*, written nearly twenty years ago now, I select the following :

"In insisting upon his unique power of attracting the limelight, much as a lightning-conductor attracts lightning, there is some danger of underrating Winston's real ability. Nothing could be further from my intention, for he is not only the best equipped political combatant of his generation, but has a facility in many directions which approaches genius. As a speaker and debater he is in the front rank; as a coiner of phrases unequalled among con-

temporaries ; as a writer he is the rival if not the superior of the best professionals—in courage undaunted—in openness of mind an example to all.

"It might be expected that such a man, driven forward by a teeming brain, tormented by grandiose conceptions struggling for expression and execution, would have the haggard appearance of the jaded worker, or would suffer in an exaggerated degree from the nervosity of the genus *irritabile vatum*. Nothing of the kind ; Winston is genial, affectionate, humorous—the best of friends, a generous opponent, taking criticism and enduring disappointment with a smile, half amused at his own career and half surprised at his astonishing success. Still boyish in mind and manner after twenty years of high office, retaining a faculty for learning which has not deserted him with increasing years. He might, indeed, without undue assumption, blazon on his escutcheon Goya's noble profession of faith, *Aun aprendo* (I continue to learn) rather than the less appropriate motto of the Churchills, *Fiel pero des dichado* (Faithful but Unfortunate)."

Action and words have been curiously interwoven in Mr. Churchill's life story. It is a man of action that he appears as leader of the nation at war. Yet it was by words rather than deeds that he built up his reputation. Words, written words, and spoken words, produced his eminence. In words his career has been crowned in this final phase—words that have been an inspiration to his fellow-countrymen and to free men the world over. No speeches in our time or in any time have produced so vast an influence on events.

Mr. Churchill maintains and adds new lustre to the literary tradition of our Prime Ministers—Gladstone, Beaconsfield, Russell, Rosebery, Balfour, and Baldwin. As master of words and language Mr. Churchill surpasses all. His speeches will be read in the years to come as much for their literary excellences as for their historic interest.

His books have established him as one of the figures in English literature. In *The World Crisis* he produced one of the finest contemporary records of the war.<sup>1</sup> His life of Randolph Churchill is a skilful piece of work, and his *Marlborough* takes its place among the first-rate biographies. Beyond these there are the sketches he has written of his contemporaries ; the novel of his youth, *Savrola*, that survives as a literary curiosity ; and the mass of ephemeral writings that he has scattered amongst the Press of two continents.

<sup>1</sup> A great admirer of *The World Crisis* was the late King George V, who would pause in his reading of the account of the Battle of Jutland to work out the courses of the ships mentioned in the text. The King's librarian, Mr. Owen Morshead, has recorded that of *Marlborough* His Majesty remarked : "There's Winston's life of his ancestor—no doubt everything he did was right ! A bit too highbrow for me I expect, but I shall take it down to Sandringham to have a try ; I dare say I shan't get far. Beautiful writer he is and a wonderful good fellow, too, into the bargain." (Quoted in John Gore's memoir of King George V.)

Over and above these are the countless memoranda with which he has bombarded Departments, colleagues and Cabinets during the long period of his contact with affairs. Beyond these are the literary gems of his private correspondence, unconsidered trifles that have so far entertained only the limited circle of their recipients.

Forcefulness, lucidity and majesty—these are the characteristics of his style, founded unashamedly on Gibbon and Macaulay. In book or speech the style is the same—the books could be delivered as speeches and the speeches will be read in books. He writes and speaks as he lives, in the heroic manner.

Self-expression in words is a fundamental necessity of his being. Physical and mental impressions acting on the sensitive instrument of his brain release forces that set words in motion. Until they have discharged themselves in the orderly sequence of written thought, peace and harmony cannot be restored within him. His speeches and writings are besprinkled with the revelations that have been forced out of him by the stimulus of his latest experiences. I choose at random by way of example.

While he was visiting New York in 1932, it was December the 13th, he was knocked down in the street by a passing car. His injuries were grave. Fifteen bones were broken, there was internal haemorrhage and for two days life itself was in danger. He was, as he said, "Very tough and very lucky" and so survived. Before he had left his sick bed he had dictated a graphic and detailed record of his impressions, complete—so insatiable is his wide-ranging curiosity—complete with a mathematical estimate of the forces involved. He wrote :

"There was one moment—I cannot measure it in time—of a world aglare, of a man aghast. I certainly thought quickly enough to achieve the idea '*I am going to be run down and probably killed.*' Then came the blow.

"I felt it on my forehead and across the thighs. But besides the blow there was an impact, a shock, a concussion indescribably violent. It blotted out everything except thought.

"A friend of mine of mathematical predilections has been kind enough to calculate the stresses involved in the collision. The car weighed some 2,400 pounds. With my evening coat on I could not have weighed much less than 200 pounds. Taking the rate of the car at thirty-five miles an hour—I think a moderate estimate—I had actually to absorb in my body 6,000 foot-pounds. It was the equivalent of falling thirty feet on to a pavement. The energy absorbed, *though not, of course, the application of destructive force,* was the equivalent of stopping ten pounds of buckshot dropped 600 feet, or two charges of buckshot at point-blank range.

"I do not understand why I was not broken like an egg-shell or squashed like a gooseberry. I have seen that the poor policeman

who was killed on the Oxford Road was hit by a vehicle travelling at very much the same speed and was completely shattered. I certainly must be very tough or very lucky, or both."

Few men, even amongst our authors, would have chosen to write an essay on so grievous personal suffering. For him it was a necessity and I doubt whether his convalescence would have been completed until what he felt had been expressed.

As a book this biography falls into four divisions—the earlier years for which his own writings are the chief source of information : his political career down to 1922 for which fairly complete documentary evidence exists ; the period of the Years Between on which there has been only a partial revelation ; and the final phase in the present war of which only the public facts are known.

Mr. Churchill has been nearly as generous as Bernard Shaw in his autobiographical revelations, and I have drawn freely from these sources—*The World Crisis*, *My Early Life*, and *Thoughts and Adventures*. There is scarcely a book of contemporary reminiscences that has not got its anecdotes of Winston Churchill and I have gleaned a rich harvest in contemporary memoirs. Particularly valuable are the lively pages of Lord Beaverbrook's *Politicians and the War*, with their copious references to Winston. Mr. Lloyd George's Memoirs and Lord Riddell's Diary are valuable in the extreme. I have had the advantage of guidance from the pioneers amongst the Churchill biographers—Ephesian and Hugh Martin.

By self-denying endurance I have refrained from appropriating any of the stories told by that fascinating anecdotalist, Sir Edward Marsh, who was for many years Mr. Churchill's peregrinating private secretary, following him from one office of state to another. The stories of his Chief find their perfect setting in Sir Edward's own book of reminiscences.

To the mass of Churchill literature, Mr. Brendan Bracken will, I hope, one day add his contribution. If the Minister of Information could spare the time, amidst his labours for the world's press, he could write a personal account not to be excelled of the man to whom he formerly acted as Parliamentary Private Secretary.

I have to express my sense of indebtedness to my friend and colleague, Leonard Russell, for the advice and encouragement he has given me ; and to J. C. M. Sime for his help in preparing the manuscript for the press.

One further point I should add—I was much perplexed over the matter of the name. "Mr. Churchill" appears to be so formal for the man the people have taken to their hearts as "Winston" and so it is as "Winston" that I have for the most part referred to him. And if Mr. Churchill became Winston then the full formality of "Mr. Asquith" and "Mr. Chamberlain" seemed out of place.

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*Some misconceptions corrected about England's warrior statesman, a man of words and actions.*

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The influences of the Old World and the New played their part in the birth of Winston Spencer-Churchill, child of brilliant parents. Toy soldiers determine that he shall be trained for a soldier and after boring days at Harrow, he enters Sandhurst.

Determined to see active service he combines the role of War Correspondent and soldier; is under fire in Cuba, takes part in fighting on the North-West Frontier and charges with the Lancers at Omdurman. He fights the campaigns over again in his books, and attacks Kitchener.

Deciding to try his hand at politics, he encounters a financial obstacle. He makes his first speech on a political platform with success, but fails to convince the electors of Oldham.

Arriving in South Africa as War Correspondent, he plays a militant role in the incident of the armoured train, is taken prisoner and escapes. £25 is the price on his head.

Returning to England, he finds himself the hero of the hour, and is returned in triumph as M.P. for Oldham. He makes a brilliant maiden speech in the House and begins a lifelong friendship with Lloyd George.

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## II. THE RADICAL PHASE . . . . .

In partnership with Lloyd George he works for social reforms and causes a Cabinet crisis by opposing expenditure on the Navy. As Home Secretary he asks for troops to keep order during the miners' strike and goes to the front in the Sidney Street siege.

## III. FIRST LORD . . . . .

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He restores the Gold Standard, and becomes an editor in the General Strike. Failing to economize he displays ingenuity in balancing budgets without new taxes.

He breaks with the Conservatives on India and denounces the Prime Minister for bonelessness. As the Nazis come to power he urges that Britain must rearm.

When King Edward the Eighth decides to relinquish the throne, he acts as Royal counsellor, pleads for time and patience, and experiences the hostility of the House.

He continues his rearmament campaign, comes to the rescue of Neville Chamberlain in a budgetary predicament and champions Anthony Eden. He states his own proposals in face of the growing Nazi peril and denounces the Munich surrender.

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Completing his Ministry of all Parties as France is invaded he calls his colleagues and the country to "blood and tears, toil and sweat".

He goes to Paris to put heart into the Reynaud Ministry, and when Pétain capitulates, calls upon his countrymen to acquit themselves like men in "their finest hour".

In a series of magnificent speeches he rallies the national spirits. He succeeds to the Conservative leadership and checks circumlocution in Whitehall.

He appeals to Italy over the heads of her Rulers, and justifies the despatch of aid to Greece in a speech which wins him a Parliamentary triumph.

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*PHASE THE FIRST*

*Years of Apprenticeship*

*Plays in the many games of life that one  
Where what he most doth value must be won  
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay  
Nor thought of tender happiness betray  
Who, not content that former worth stand fast  
Looks forward, persevering to the last,  
From well to better, daily self-surpast ;  
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth  
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,  
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame  
And leave a dead unprofitable name—  
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause ;  
And while the mortal mist is gathering, draws  
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause ;  
This is the happy warrior.*

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

## CHAPTER I

### *Harrow and Sandhurst*

WINSTON CHURCHILL is the grandson of a duke, a descendant of that John Churchill who won the famous victories for Queen Anne, was rewarded with a dukedom, and chose the title of Marlborough, though his ponderous palace was built at Blenheim in Oxfordshire.

Rarely, since the rough and tumble days when duke thought it no shame to fight with duke, have our dukes so far departed from decorum as to make a reputation for themselves in the world. The Dukes of Marlborough maintained the ducal tradition with a graceful nonchalance. Their names are writ large in Debrett but are not conspicuous in the annals of the Empire. The seventh Duke, however, had a son who gained vulgar fame and a place in history by becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer. This son, Lord Randolph Churchill, had a son in turn, who gained even greater fame and is the subject of this present memoir.

Winston, of course, is proud—what man would not be so?—that he is descended from the military genius who won the victories of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet. But it seems doubtful whether the Marlborough's blood in his veins can account for his greatness. If it be so, then the yeast of heredity must take an unconscionable time to ferment. It is easier to suppose that the infusion of newer blood from the new world may have galvanized the ancient Churchill stock and so produced the genius that is Winston.

His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was the third son of the seventh Duke of Marlborough; his mother was Jeannette, daughter of Leonard Jerome, of New York, one of the most forceful personalities in the United States of three-quarters of a century or so ago.

Their romance began in the romantic setting of Cowes Week in the year 1873. She was nineteen; he was twenty-four. It was a case of love at first sight.

On the second night of their acquaintance they each confided to a friend that their fates had been decided. On the third day Lord Randolph—but the happy tale is told by their son himself, who described the match in the biography of his father:

"Next day they met again 'by accident'—so runs the account I have received—and went for a walk. That night—the third of their acquaintance—was a beautiful night, warm and still with the lights of the yachts shining on the water and the sky bright with stars. After dinner they found themselves alone together in the garden and—brief courtship notwithstanding—he proposed and was accepted."

The course of true love did not run smooth and I should like to tell you of how the plighted lovers overcame parental and ducal obstacles. But this is the life of Winston and not of his parents ; and if you want to read this very Victorian and charming love story you must find it in the son's admirable biography.

Their trials at last over, Lord Randolph and Jenny were married on 15 April, 1874, at the British Embassy in Paris, the bride being then resident in Paris with her mother. The following December *The Times* newspaper announced :

*"On the 30th November at Blenheim Palace the Lady Randolph Churchill, prematurely of a son."*

Winston thus, anonymously, made his first appearance in history.

Before passing on, I must say a word about his grandfather Jerome, this American to whom he is indebted for the quality of force and drive, and of his mother, one of the beauties of her day.

Leonard Jerome, at the time of his daughter's marriage to Lord Randolph, was proprietor and editor of the *New York Times*. He had already made and lost one fortune and won a second. He founded the first two great racecourses in the United States and was one of the fathers of the American Turf.

His forcefulness was sufficiently attested when, during the American Civil War, riotous mobs attacked the offices of the *New York Times*. Mr. Jerome had taken the precaution of arming his staff with rifles and had even purchased a battery of cannon. He had no hesitation in ordering the arms to be turned on the mob, who were beaten off, not without bloodshed.

For the space of two generations the daughter of this American man of action shed the radiance of her charm on London society. Lady Randolph was a woman of fascinating and arresting appearance and of rare vivacity. Her son wrote of her :

"My mother made a brilliant impression upon my childhood's life. She shone for me like the evening star, I loved her dearly but at a distance. She always seemed to me a fairy princess."

Winston quotes with appreciation the description that Lord D'Abernon wrote of her :

"... I have the clearest recollection of seeing her for the first time. It was at the Vice-Regal Lodge at Dublin. She stood on one side to the left of the entrance. The Viceroy was on a dais at the farther end of the room surrounded by a brilliant staff, but eyes were not turned on him or on his consort, but on a dark, lithe figure, standing somewhat apart and appearing to be of another texture to those around her, radiant, translucent, intense. A diamond star in her hair, her favourite ornament—its lustre dimmed by the flashing glory of her eyes. More of the panther than of the woman in her look, but with a cultivated intelligence unknown to the jungle. Her courage not less great than that of her husband—fit mother for the descendants of the great Duke."

Lady Randolph outlived her husband by a quarter of a century. When she had been five years a widow, she married Cornwallis West, from whom she obtained a divorce in 1913. Then in the evening of her life she became the wife of a former colonial administrator. She died in 1921.

Of Winston's father, Lord Randolph, I need only say here that he was a political meteor who flashed brilliantly upon the scene about the year 1880. He was termed, not inaptly, a "great elemental force in British politics."

He gained for himself the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer and was on the point of challenging the authority of Lord Salisbury as Premier and leader of the Conservative Party. Then, meteor-like, he fell; and as he fell he was smitten by illness that robbed him slowly of his mental powers and then of life itself.

I have dwelt upon these origins as the means of offering some explanation of the source of the genius that is Winston Churchill. Of his capabilities there was little evidence in his childhood days.

Had those capabilities, indeed, been more apparent his career would have been in the Law and he might by now have been sitting in wig and ermine upon the judge's bench. But Fate decided otherwise and tin soldiers were in this case Fate's instrument.

Tin soldiers were the chief amusement of Winston's boyhood. He commanded one army, and his brother Jack another. They were forces on a continental scale, fifteen hundred men in all, organized as an infantry division with a cavalry brigade. By a treaty for the limitation of armaments his brother Jack was only allowed coloured troops. Even these were not given artillery—a very important point, since Winston's army could muster eighteen field guns, besides fortress pieces.

One day Lord Randolph came, like a Field Marshal, on a visit of inspection. All the troops were drawn up ready for immediate attack. Lord Randolph spent twenty minutes studying the scene.

He then turned towards Winston and asked him if he would like

to become a soldier. The boy thought it would be splendid to command an army, so he said 'Yes' at once.

It was a fateful answer. His father took him at his word and Winston henceforth was committed to an Army career.

How strangely the minor and the major things are linked across the years—the small chances of the individual's life and the turning-points in the lives of nations. Had Paul who was called Saul never ridden one day to Damascus, had Hitler never gone as a house-painter to Vienna, how different history would have been.

And had Winston Churchill never played with tin soldiers he would have gone to the Bar and not into the Army; he would not then have found fame in the Boer War, become a figure in public life before he was thirty, and been First Lord before 1914 came.

Even the tin soldiers might not have been the instruments of Fate had Lord Randolph had a higher opinion of his son's abilities. But he had considered that Winston was not clever enough for a career at the Bar—and so tin soldiers and the Army.

He reached Sandhurst by way of Harrow. Eton was the family tradition; but Winston had a weak chest and it was considered that the school on the hill would be better for him than the rival establishment by the river.

But for the discerning eye of Dr. Weldon, then head master, Harrow's doors would have been closed to him after the limitations of his learning disclosed by the papers he sent in at the entrance examination.

There was the terrible Latin prose paper—a blot, a smudge and a pair of brackets as the total output for two hours' effort.

"It was from these slender indications of scholarship," wrote Winston in his later years, "that Mr. Weldon drew the conclusion that I was worthy to pass into Harrow. It is very much to his credit. It showed that he was a man capable of looking beneath the surface of things: a man not dependent upon paper manifestations. I have always had the greatest regard for him."

Harrow days were not happy days, but days of work that Winston found anything but congenial, an unending spell of worries that did not seem trivial. It was not only that school tasks were difficult—they seemed purposeless.

He sighed for something practical. If only he had had to run errands as a messenger boy, or to toil as a bricklayer's mate—that would have been something real. Better to have been the son of a grocer and to have helped dress the front windows of the shop—"it would have taught me more and I should have got to know my father, which would have been a great joy to me."

There is a cry straight from the heart in those words of regret that he did not get to know his father better, that father of meteoric

brilliance who in Winston's schooldays thrust himself into the front rank of politics and then threw all away.

Winston did get to know his father ; but only after his father's death when he came to tell the story of his career.

In life he had no more than three or four long, intimate conversations with Lord Randolph, who died when Winston was twenty-one.

"All my dreams of comradeship with him, of entering Parliament at his side and in his support were ended. There remained for me only to pursue his aims and vindicate his memory."

Harrow days and Sandhurst days—No release from school for the proper business of life was ever more welcome.

The schoolboy who for all his terms was bored to tears because he had hardly ever been asked to learn anything which seemed to be of the slightest use to him, found life transformed as a cavalry cadet. Now there was use in everything he had to learn.

Gone were the tedium of Latin and Greek. In their place were the enchantments of military studies with a purpose. He had now to learn tactics, fortification, topography, military law, and military administration. In place of the games which failed to amuse, there were gymnastics, and above all riding.

There were some curious blanks in the military studies of the 'Nineties. Winston was never taught anything about bombs or hand-grenades. These weapons were known to be long obsolete, gone out of use in the eighteenth century, and the military mind could not conceive that they could be useful in modern war.

While he was still at Sandhurst young Winston made his maiden speech in a public, if not exactly a political, cause.

He and his fellow cadets were in the habit, when in London on leave, of visiting the old Empire in Leicester Square. At that time a purity campaign was being conducted against the music-halls, and in particular the promenade of the Empire, by a Mrs. Ormiston Chant, member of London County Council.

The defenders of the liberties of the music-hall had the powerful backing of the *Daily Telegraph*, which ran a 'Prudes on the Prowl' campaign. An Entertainments Protection League was formed, of which Winston became a member, and he pawned his gold watch to aid the League's finances.

Mrs. Chant, though she did not carry everything before her, was successful in getting a light canvas screen erected between the offending bars at the Empire and the promenade. On the first Saturday after its appearance, Churchill and his friends visited the theatre. Many sympathizers were present.

Comment led to action and a crowd of some 200 to 300 persons stormed the barricades and tore them down.

At this moment of triumph young Churchill made his maiden speech. Mounting on the debris, he harangued the throng and pointed to the moral of the occasion. "You have seen us tear down these barricades to-night : see that you pull down those responsible for them at the next election."

These words, we are assured, were received with rapturous applause.

Churchill's career at Sandhurst ended in 1894. He passed out eighth in his batch of a hundred and fifty. In March of the following year he was gazetted to the Fourth Hussars.

## CHAPTER II

### *Little Wars*

A MAN of action is subject to an implacable and unceasing urge to fulfil his life's purpose. Always he must act, and for Winston Churchill, subaltern in His Majesty's Hussars, action meant fighting.

In the 'Nineties it wasn't so easy to find scope for indulging one's taste for battle. The nineteenth century and the Victorian age were drawing peacefully to a close : it looked as if war was about to become extinct. Somehow, somewhere, the young Hussar must find the means to gratify his longing.

In the mess a young man who could say he had been in action would have the advantage of his fellows, none of whom had gained so coveted a distinction in the piping years of peace. He would have an advantage when it came to promotion. So Lieutenant Churchill bent all his energies to the single purpose of getting under fire ; and when the Winstonian energies are devoted to a single purpose the walls of Jericho have invariably fallen.

He was to spend five years a-soldiering and in those five years he contrived to push himself into four campaigns. Agamemnon could not have done more.

The revolt of the Guerrillas in Cuba first brought him under fire. He graduated with the Malakand Field Force under General Sir Bindon Blood. He forced himself into Kitchener's force in the Sudan and was just in time to take part in the charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman. And he was the hero of an episode or two in the Boer War.

Such was the record he could look back on when he left soldiering for politics at the age of twenty-six, all unconscious that ahead of him lay active service in a fifth and far greater war than these.

They were magnificent these days, carefree, swashbuckling days, of life lived to the full as Winston swept through one war and so on to the next.

The opening affair in Cuba was a small thing as wars are reckoned now—a few thousand men on either side, and none of the complicated paraphernalia of the modern army. But the essentials of war are the same from age to age. It has always been the greatest gamble of all whether waged with flint axes or Bren guns. And the price of failure has always been the same ; whether death from bow and arrow or from a rifle bullet it is no less inexorably final.

Winston's approach to war has always been that of the eager amateur. "Did you enjoy it ?" he asked a sergeant after they had emerged from the charge at Omdurman. Of the private on the Western Front twenty years later he inquired, "Don't you like it ?"

Winston liked it and played his part with rare zest.

The first taste of war in Cuba came after seven months with the Hussars on his first spell of long leave. It was not, as I said, much of a war, but it was all that offered. So Winston soon pushed through the formalities of getting himself attached to the Army of General Campos.

For this he was indebted to the good offices of his father's old friend and colleague in the Fourth Party, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, then Ambassador in Madrid.

There was not much difficulty about it for General Campos felt flattered that the British Army in the person of two of its subalterns—Winston was accompanied by a fellow officer—should be interested in his tactics against the Guerrillas.

One other arrangement Winston had to make before setting off. His subaltern's allowance of £500 a year did not permit of trips to Cuba. So following the example of Lord Randolph, who was commissioned by the *Daily Graphic* to write on his tour in South Africa, he secured a commission for a series of articles from Cuba.

Like another Long John Silver seeing Treasure Island for the first time, Winston landed on the lovely isle of Cuba and joined a mobile column advancing in pursuit of an elusive enemy with whom contact was rarely to be made in the Cuban jungle.

They marched for several days and then, at last, came the adventure for which Winston had travelled half-way across the world. There was a volley from the forest and all was scurry and commotion ; bullets whistled through the air and a horse was hit.

Winston had been under fire. His reactions he analysed in the record he gives of his early life<sup>1</sup>.

"Meanwhile I had been meditating upon the wounded horse.

<sup>1</sup> *My Early Life : a Roving Commission*, by Winston Churchill.

The bullet had struck between his ribs, the blood dripped on the ground, and there was a circle of dark red on his bright-chestnut coat about a foot wide. Evidently he was going to die, for his saddle and bridle were soon taken off him. As I watched I could not help reflecting that the bullet had certainly passed within a foot of my head. So at any rate I had been 'under fire.' That was something. Nevertheless, I began to take a more thoughtful view of our enterprise than I had hitherto done."

A few days later there was a more formal engagement between the troops and the Guerrillas. There was heavy firing on both sides ; the air was full of whizzings and there were dull thuds as bullets found a billet in the trees.

To Winston, the observer, it seemed very dangerous indeed and he was astounded to note how few people were hit amid all the clatter.

Winston came home to find his regiment preparing for India, and in India there was trouble among the restless tribesmen who live nearly on the top of the world on the North-West frontier. A field force was sent to deal with the disturbance of the Empire's peace but, alas, Winston's regiment was not part of it.

Happily, however, the O.G. was Sir Bindon Blood, who had already promised, if the opportunity came his way, to give Winston the chance of active service. A telegram reminding Sir Bindon of the pledge drew the response that there were no vacancies in the Command but that Winston could come along as officer correspondent if some paper would commission him.

Those were still the easy days when officers of the Army were permitted to serve Fleet Street as well as their country. Winston was soon armed with the commissions of the *Pioneer* of Allahabad and the *Daily Telegraph* of London, the latter journal being prepared to pay £5 per column for the privilege of publishing his despatches.

Leave granted from his own regiment, Winston was shortly presenting himself at the headquarters of the Malakand field force engaged in some tight places in the Himalayan passes.

Here were no elusive Cuban rebels but Pathan tribesmen, untamed by civilization, among the best fighters in the world.

Winston was with the force despatched to the Mahmund Valley where, under the influence of the Fakir of Ipi, the tribesmen staged a revolt again a few years ago, for though you may temporarily quell, you cannot permanently extinguish the Pathans' fighting spirit.

In the action of 16 September (of the year 1896) the British troops were not wisely commanded and only extricated themselves, with considerable losses, by reason of the pluck and determination of the junior officers and men. It was hand-to-hand fighting in the

Mahmud Valley that day and Winston was in the thick of it. You can judge the sort of thing it was from his own inimitable account. The advance party had been forced to retreat down a rocky space, harassed by the enemy.

"The Adjutant had been shot. Four of his soldiers were carrying him. He was a heavy man, and they all clutched at him. Out from the edge of the houses rushed half a dozen Pathan swordsmen. The bearers of the poor Adjutant let him fall and fled at their approach.

"The leading tribesman rushed upon the prostrate figure and slashed at it three or four times with his sword. I forgot everything else at this moment except a desire to kill this man. I wore my long cavalry sword well sharpened. After all, I had won the Public Schools Fencing Medal. I resolved on personal combat *& l'arme blanche*.

"The savage saw me coming. I was not more than twenty yards away. He picked up a big stone and hurled it at me with his left hand, and then awaited me, brandishing his sword. There were others waiting not far behind.

"I changed my mind about the cold steel. I pulled out my revolver, took, as I thought, most careful aim, and fired. No result. I fired again. No result. I fired again. Whether I hit him or not I cannot tell. At any rate he ran back two or three yards and plumped down behind a rock.

"The fusillade was continuous. I looked around. I was all alone with the enemy. Not a friend was to be seen. I ran as fast as I could. There were bullets everywhere. I got to the first knoll. Hurrah, there were the Sikhs holding the lower one ! They made vehement gestures, and in a few moments I was among them."

Winston gained a mention in despatches, Sir Bindon Blood praising "the courage and resolution of Lieut. W. L. S. Churchill, 4th Hussars, the correspondent of the *Pioneer* newspaper, who made himself useful at a critical moment."

A few days later, owing to losses in action, he was appointed Officer in the 38th Dogras—the first time a British cavalry officer had been attached to a native cavalry regiment. The men liked their new officer and he warmed to them. There was only one real drawback, the barrier of languages. He could only boast of three words in the native vernacular—*Chalo*, meaning 'get on' ; *Maro*, meaning 'kill' ; and *Tally-ho*, which means the same the world over.

They were good days, and I do not know who enjoyed himself the more—Lieut. Churchill of the Hussars, or Mr. Churchill, correspondent of the *Pioneer* newspaper, Allahabad, and the *Daily Telegraph*, London. His newspaper work was as good as his soldier-

ing, and in his double personality he would have been content to go on getting in and out of tight corners in the mountains until the last tribe in the last valley had been subdued. But he was attached only unofficially to the expedition while on leave, and at length he could no longer delay returning to his own regiment at Bangalore.

It was time to exchange the real thing on the frontier for the imitation of manœuvres. But the leisure of regimental life gave Winston the opportunity to present to the world his account of the frontier war in *The Malakand Field Force*.

The book was an immediate success and the author found solace amidst the tedium of regimental life in savouring the fame of a best seller. There was praise on all sides, from the reviewers to the Prince of Wales, who sent a kind note of congratulation assuring the author that everyone was reading his book, which was spoken of "only with praise."

The latter statement was true enough for the general reader, but it did not tell all the story ; for in the highest military circles there was indignation that the young lieutenant should so far have departed from the professional proprieties as to criticize the operations of his superior officers.

*The Malakand Field Force*, indeed, was a lively piece of military criticism in which the mistakes of the commanders were exposed by a man who had been on the spot. It was good fun for the reader, and the wits renamed the book *A Subaltern's Hints to Generals*.

The descendant of Marlborough had given the first illustration of his quality. Then, as thereafter, in engagements ashore or afloat, he had the conviction that he knew, when admirals and generals might not, how the fight should be fought.

The book was a financial as well as a literary success and it set the author a-thinking. If, he reflected, books were as easy as that to write—and there were plenty more where that one came from—and if they paid so well, then a man on subaltern's pay must really consider whether his future lay in the Army.

Cuba, India, and then the Sudan.

There had been trouble in the Sudan for several years, legacy of the days of General Gordon. Kitchener was Sirdar now and he had decided that it was time to strike a blow, decisive for all time, at the Dervishes and their capital at Omdurman.

It was a favourable moment for Lieutenant Churchill, who was on home leave. But though the time might be propitious, the authorities were unkind. The subaltern who had had the hardihood to teach the Generals their job in public print was not *persona grata* in military circles.

Application was made to the Sirdar ; Kitchener replied with an uncompromising negative.

Winston Churchill's star seems always to rise in the ascendant

when circumstances are least favourable. The Sirdar might oppose, but what matter if the fates were favourable? And the fates decreed that at that juncture Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, should read the story of the *Malakand Field Force*.

Salisbury might be Conservative Prime Minister, but he had a mind that was not fettered by orthodoxy. He read Churchill's book with relish and invited the author, son of his rebellious Chancellor, to call on him.

The interview was cordial and Winston made use of the occasion to enlist the Prime Minister's aid on his behalf. So Lord Salisbury himself cabled to the Sirdar; still Kitchener was uncompromisingly negative in his reply.

But the young man who could find a champion in a Prime Minister was not to be gainsaid. Lady Randolph pleaded her son's cause with the Adjutant-General, Sir Evelyn Wood. A mother's charm and a Prime Minister's support were conclusive. Sir Evelyn decreed that, Sirdar or no Sirdar, young Churchill should have his way. The Sirdar's authority did not run to the Twenty-first Lancers, so Lieutenant Churchill could have a commission so long as it was unpaid. It was also a condition that if he were wounded or killed there would be no charge on Army funds.

Next and equally important was a commission from Fleet Street. The author of *The Malakand Field Force* had no difficulty there. The *Morning Post* was glad to appoint him correspondent, and the rate was now advanced to £15 a column.

So, in the summer of 1898, the young subaltern left for the wars again, his third campaign and in a third continent. In August he was at Cairo; and a month later he had reached the battle-front just in time to take part in the charge of the Twenty-first Lancers at Omdurman.

They call it the last classic cavalry charge in the history of war. There were three thousand Dervishes and three hundred Lancers. It was all over in a flash—three minutes from start to finish according to the reckoning of the stop watch, but there is no reckoning time in minutes when for a space time stands still. The sensations of a lifetime are packed into crowded minutes in the ordeal of the charge when mind and senses are going full out.

Winston has left a brilliant impressionist picture of the day, the most convincing account of a cavalry charge in military literature. For the most part authors have not taken part in charges, and those who have charged have not usually had the gift of words to describe their feelings. In him the two roles meet.

All is mirrored in his pages from the moment when the trumpet sounded 'Right wheel into line' and the trotting troops broke into a gallop—the expectancy of the approach, the confusion of the collision, the thrusting swords of the enemy, the stabbing spears—

and then through on the farther side. Winston emerged unscathed, and as he saw two or three riflemen aiming their weapons at him he experienced for the first time the gnawing sense of fear.

Troops re-formed and in the exultation of the moment looked back on what they reckoned to be a routed enemy. As blood cooled there came a sadder realization.

The Dervishes withdrew, but in good order. And of the three hundred and ten officers and men of the Twenty-first Lancers five officers and sixty-five men were lost, killed and wounded, and one hundred and twenty horses—nearly a quarter of the regiment's strength.

The bodies of about forty Dervishes were left on the desert sand. Two of them, possibly three, were the victims of Winston's pistol. On account of an old injury to his right arm which made it liable to sudden, unexpected dislocation, he had had to discard his cavalryman's sword in favour of the pistol.

With the charge at Omdurman, Winston's part in the Sudan campaign came to an end, for Kitchener reduced the force at his command. Thereafter, he fought the battles of the Sudan over again in print in a book—*The River War*.

The two volumes again made a stir for they were highly critical of the Commander-in-Chief. Kitchener was a popular figure with the public and the attacks made upon him by the Lancer-journalist were not everywhere relished.

Winston's most stringent criticisms were passed on Kitchener's treatment of the enemy. At home the cry of "Avenge Gordon" had been raised, and the Dervishes were spoken of as the scum of the earth. This may have had its influence on the attitude of the British force. Anyway, Winston asserted that the impression was general that the "fewer the prisoners taken the greater would be the satisfaction of the Commander."

He also uttered strong condemnation of the manner in which the Mahdi's tomb was destroyed and the body of the Mahdi was flung into the Nile by the Sirdar's order. This destruction, he declared, of what was sacred and holy to the natives, was an "act of which a true Christian must express abhorrence." It should be said that these passages were expunged by the author from later editions of the book.

*The River War* enhanced the reputation Winston had won with the *Malakand Field Force*. Very shortly he was to become a national figure as the result of his activities in the Boer War. But between the Sudan and South Africa a political interlude intervenes.

## CHAPTER III

*Interlude in Politics*

RETURNING home from the Nile Campaign in the autumn of 1898, Winston Churchill resigned his commission in the army and announced that he proposed to follow his father in politics.

The Adjutant-General, his friend Sir Evelyn Wood, attempted to dissuade him, but his mind was made up, and though we may be confident that Winston would have won through to the highest positions in the Army, we cannot say that he was wrong in leaving soldiering for politics. For a man of his restless ambition and varied interests, the Army offered too limited a scope.

Besides, Winston was bound to have found himself a marked man with the War Office chiefs who have no partiality for subalterns that burst into print with criticisms of their superiors. Already there was talk in service circles. He had to make up his mind between soldiering and journalism. Journalism won the day, with the opportunities it offered for entering the political field.

So in November he made application to Conservative Party Headquarters to be supplied with a constituency. He did not make much progress for there was the bar of finance. The Party Manager asked him bluntly how much he could contribute to local party funds, explaining that the safer the seat, the greater the contribution expected from the prospective member. Winston had to confess that he could offer little more than his own election expenses.

This obstacle of financial contribution still serves to deprive young men of talent but limited means from entering Parliament as Conservatives and the result is that the Party representation in Parliament is too largely made up of third-rate, elderly men, who have got the means to impress local associations.<sup>1</sup>

Winston's interview, though it failed in its main objective of a seat, at least provided him with a platform. Though there was difficulty over accepting him as a candidate, as a speaker, he learned, he would be welcomed.

So a fortnight later Mr. Winston Churchill delivered the first of the speeches which were to be the foundation of his political fortunes. It would not be correct to say that he created a political sensation, but, thanks to his connection with the *Morning Post*, he

<sup>1</sup> This experience weighed with Winston when in 1941, as Leader of the Party, he took steps to see that the Central Office should have power to call in question financial arrangements between local organizations and candidates.

was accorded greater publicity than is usually given to utterances of budding politicians.

The occasion was an autumnal garden-party in the city of Bath. With the promise of a special reporter to inspire him he polished his periods and when the appointed day came he delivered them to the faithful Conservatives of Bath. To his surprise his observations were well received. His audience cheered at all the appointed places and at one or two others that he had not foreseen.

What was more important, the special reporter was appreciative and the following morning a short leader in the *Morning Post* introduced Lord Randolph's son to the world as a new figure upon the political scene.

The following month he was introduced to an immensely greater public by the *Daily Mail*, then conducting a series of articles on prominent young men of the time. Winston was presented as the "Youngest Man in Europe," and it says much for the discernment of the anonymous author (since revealed as G. W. Steevens, the eminent war correspondent) that he could prophesy with uncanny accuracy that at the rate Churchill is going, "there will scarcely be room for him in Parliament at 30 or in Europe at 40." The pen picture deserves quotation :

"In years he is a boy ; in temperament he is also a boy ; but in intention, in deliberate plan, adaptation of means to ends, he is already a man. In any other generation but this he would be a child. Any other than he, being a junior subaltern of Hussars, would be a boisterous, simple, full-hearted, empty-headed boy. But Mr. Churchill is a man, with ambitions fixed, with the steps towards their attainment clearly defined, with a precocious, almost uncanny judgment as to the efficacy of the means to the end.

"He is what he is by breeding. From his father he derives the hereditary aptitude for affairs, the grand style of entering upon them, which are not the less hereditary in British noble families because they skip nine generations out of ten. Winston Spencer Churchill can hardly have seen much of Government and Parliament and forensic politics at twenty-three, but he moves in and out among their deviations with the ease, if not with the knowledge, of a veteran statesman. But that inheritance alone would not give him his grip and facility at twenty-three ; with us hereditary statesmen and party leaders ripen later. From his American strain he adds to this a keenness, a shrewdness, a half-cynical, personal ambition, a natural aptitude for advertisement, and, happily, a sense of humour.

"He may or may not possess the qualities which make a great general, but the question is of no sort of importance. In any case they will never be developed, for, if they exist, they are overshadowed

by qualities which might make him, almost at will, a great popular leader, a great journalist, or the founder of a great advertising business."

A month or two later Winston stood on the hustings for the first time to seek the votes of the electors of Oldham, one of the largest constituencies in the country. Oldham, according to Asquith who once went there to advise the Corporation on legal niceties of sewerage, is one of the most dismal of manufacturing towns in the country, peopled by wan-faced, grimy, tired artisans, who "have never known life in its real sense and never will know it to their dying day." But to the young politician Oldham appeared far otherwise as one of the most romantic places on earth, peopled by men of enlightenment and discernment who would appreciate the qualities of the youngest man in Europe.

It was not due to the party managers at Conservative Headquarters that Winston got his chance to contest the seat, but to the whim of a Mr. Robert Ascroft, the senior Conservative member and legal adviser to one of the cotton workers' unions. Oldham was a two-member constituency and Ascroft was on the look-out for someone to stand with him as his fellow Conservative was ailing. Why his choice fell on Winston is not explained, but so it was.

Before Winston had addressed his first meeting, however, Ascroft died suddenly. Oldham Conservatives honoured his choice and, the second member retiring, Winston contested the election in association with a working man candidate, James Mawdsley, secretary of another trades union.

They were not a well-assorted pair, the grandson of a Duke and the Tory Socialist, and they had to face two strong opponents, champions of Liberalism. The senior of these was a Mr. Emmott, a wealthy local employer, already prominent in Oldham politics, who rose to be Deputy Speaker in the House of Commons; the other, Mr. Walter Runciman, son of the noted shipowner, who was destined to hold Cabinet office under Asquith, Ramsay MacDonald, Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain.

Winston conducted his first campaign with more vigour than discretion. At his adoption meeting he startled one of his most influential supporters with a blunt disclaimer: "I disagree with you."

Party headquarters he defied. They expected him to champion the Government's Tithes Bill; but he pledged himself to oppose it, thereby drawing rebuke from the great Arthur Balfour who said bitingly: "I thought he was a young man of promise, but it appears he is only a young man of promises."

'Winnie,' as he was soon named by the electors, gave early evidence of his quality in dealing with opponents. Mr. Runciman

had the temerity to boast that he had not been a "swashbuckler round the world."

The opening was too good to be missed. "Is this," Winston asked Oldham, "the sort of welcome you will give the Lancashire Fusiliers when they come home from Omdurman? Mr. Runciman has not had the experience of the Lancashire Fusiliers—his contests have been more pacific, and while they were fighting at Omdurman for their country he was fighting at Gravesend for himself; while they were gaining a victory, Mr. Runciman at Gravesend was being defeated."

Mr. Runciman did not have the last word but he had the last laugh. When the votes were counted, the champions of Liberalism headed the poll; the Tory Democrat and the Tory Socialist were over a thousand votes behind.

"I don't think that the world has seen the last of either of us," was Walter Runciman's comment to young Winston after the declaration. This at least was an observation from which the youngest man in Europe did not dissent.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Prisoner of the Boers*

IN the month of October 1899, Winston Churchill sailed for South Africa to report the Boer War as special correspondent of the *Morning Post*. He was not yet 25, but it was his fourth campaign and it was to place him in a position of unparalleled popularity with the British public as the hero of the day.

Winston, indeed, can find cause for satisfaction in the fact that within a fortnight of his arrival at the Cape, he was taken prisoner by the Boers. The circumstances and the escape that followed won him renown that he could not have bought for all the diamonds in the Rand, nor yet have gained in a dozen years in politics.

He set out for the Cape well satisfied with himself that he had been commissioned as War Correspondent for the princely salary of £250 a month, and all expenses paid. He was privileged to be fellow-passenger of the Commander of the British Forces, Sir Redvers Buller.

On the voyage out, he, like the subalterns aboard, was fearful lest the show should be over, and victory for the British gained before he got there. There need have been no anxiety on that score.

When the *Dunnottar Castle* landed its distinguished passengers, the situation was very different from what they, in their contempt for the Boers, had expected. So far from a British victory, there had been British defeats. At Nicholson's Nek 1,200 British infantry had been forced to surrender. The remnant of the Force had retired to Ladysmith, which, with Mafeking and Kimberley, was laid siege to by the enemy.

Winston made his way to the front at Estcourt, where his former schoolmate, later Cabinet colleague, Leo Amery, had preceded him as correspondent of *The Times*.

From Estcourt, on November 14th, an armoured train steamed out early in the morning bearing a company of Dublin Fusiliers and another of the Durban Light Infantry, under the command of Captain Haldane, a six-pounder naval gun and Winston Churchill. The force was instructed to reconnoitre in the direction of Colenso.

The Boers were reconnoitring that day, too, and the armoured train came under heavy fire. The driver put on full steam in an attempt to run the gauntlet, but the Boers had blocked the track. Three of the trucks were derailed, bringing the rest to a standstill. The naval gun was put out of action and the deficiencies of the armour of the trucks were soon revealed by the bullets that came piercing through it.

Young Churchill as non-combatant man of letters had no right to do more than watch, but he quickly forgot his civilian status, and took a leading part in the proceedings.

While Captain Haldane and some of the men returned the enemy fire, Winston tried to get the train in going order. With the bullets spitting about him he called for volunteers to free the engine. "Keep cool, men," he said, adding in an aside, "This will be interesting for my paper."

Then the engine-driver, another civilian, was grazed on the head and threatened to throw in his hand. Winston comforted him with the remark, "No man is hit twice on the same day," and induced him to carry on.

They could not get the trucks going despite all Winston's efforts, and so while Haldane fought a rearguard action, the locomotive, with as many wounded as it could carry and with Winston on the cab, set out slowly to provide cover for as many of the troops as could shelter behind it.

They had gone some way back to safety when the rearguard fell some distance behind and Winston thought he should inquire into their condition. Alighting, he marched back along the track to discover that they had been taken prisoner.

His own position was now precarious. He turned and ran. He was in a cutting, offering no cover. Two Boers made him their target. As he fled with bullets on either side a third Boer came

riding up. There was nothing for it. Winston held up his hands in surrender.

If a war correspondent on the Western Front had been caught in the circumstances that Winston was taken that day, his fate would have been quickly settled. A civilian who takes part in fighting has no claim to be treated as prisoner of war and a drum-head court-martial is liable to put a summary close to his career.

It was with every apprehension that Winston joined the other prisoners and his anxiety rose when he was ordered to stand apart from them while his fate was decided.

His relief was infinite when he was told to rejoin the others. "We don't catch the son of a lord every day," a Boer explained to him. "We are not going to let you go."

So off to Pretoria he was marched to join sixty British officers in the improvised concentration camp of the State Model Schools.

Here for the next three weeks he passed fretful days pining for freedom. Now that his safety was assured he demanded his release as a war correspondent, but the Boers, who had overlooked his transgression of the rules of war, were not prepared for such an excess of indulgence as to release so warlike a reporter. Winston had to remain in durance, which was really not so vile if chess, cards, cigarettes and rounders could be accepted as satisfactory solaces of incarceration. He was not prepared to accept, and began planning means of escape.

Before following him on his next adventures, I must pause for a moment to mention the identity of the Boer who had made him captive that memorable day in the railway cutting. Winston was not aware of his identity then, nor did he become so until some years later.

The war was over and a party of Boer Generals were visiting London to seek financial assistance. At lunch, Winston was introduced to their leader, General Botha. They swapped stories of the war and when the ex-correspondent of the *Morning Post* had related how he was made prisoner, Botha revealed himself as the man who had effected the capture.

The General had been serving at the time as a private soldier. The two men became friends and when they next met, in 1906, Winston was junior Minister of the Crown, and Botha was first Prime Minister of the Transvaal. They were to meet again ten years later during the war in which Botha, fighting for Britain now, conducted the brilliant campaign that ended in the capture of German South-West.

Three weeks' confinement in the Model Schools taxed Winston's patience beyond all bearing. Somehow he must get free. The difficulties were formidable. The country was unknown to him and he could speak neither Dutch nor Kaffir.

The Model Schools were guarded by forty South African Republican Police, of whom ten were on duty at a time, armed with rifle and revolver. The buildings were surrounded by an iron grille and a corrugated-iron fence about ten feet high.

On the evening of December 12th Winston's chance came. He scrambled over the wall—two sentries were standing with their backs turned only fifteen yards away—and lowered himself into a garden on the opposite side. It was the first fence. But there he was, in the heart of the enemy's country, without compass or map, and nearly three hundred miles from Delagoa Bay in Portuguese East Africa, the nearest place of safety. But he had £75 in his pocket and four slabs of chocolate, and with these he was ready at any rate to risk the hazards of the unknown.

Boldly passing within five yards of the sentry at the gates of the schools, he walked into Pretoria and out into the suburbs. His quickly formed plan was to find a railway line which would lead him eastwards. He found the track and walked along it for some hours, leaving it from time to time to skirt villages or guarded bridges.

Presently he heard the whistle of an approaching locomotive. It was a goods train travelling sufficiently slowly to enable him somehow or other to scramble on to the couplings and thence into a truck. In this he travelled throughout the night, taking cover in some woods as the dawn came.

He sheltered throughout a long and tedious day, and when night fell he hoped that another train would carry him on his journey. The plan was good, all that was lacking was the train. Not one came along throughout the six hours he waited expectantly. So he was forced to plod on on foot, making detours to avoid guards at bridges, plunging through bog and swamp.

It was impossible to proceed and he resolved to make for a kraal in the hope that the Kaffirs would give him aid. Lights shone in the far distance and he walked towards them. It took him a long time to reach the place and he was exhausted when at last he knocked on the door.

A voice in Dutch asked him who he was. At the sound of that tongue Winston thought that his escapade was ended, but there was nothing for it but to answer in English. On the spur of the moment he improvised a story about a railway accident.

His luck was in. By chance his steps in the dark had taken him to the house of an Englishman, the only place within twenty miles where he would have found a friend.

For the next few days Winston was concealed in one of the pits of the Transvaal Collieries while the hue and cry was raised by the Dutch. A proclamation was posted offering £25 reward to 'anyone who brings in the escaped prisoner of war, Churchill, dead or alive.'

The description of the wanted fugitive was not a flattering portrait. He was thus described:

*Englishman, 25 years old, about 5 ft. 8 in. tall, indifferent build, walks with a forward stoop, pale appearance, red-brownish hair, small and hardly noticeable moustache, talks through his nose and cannot pronounce the letter 's' properly.*

For days the authorities searched for their man. The homes of known British sympathizers were searched, but Winston was safe with the rats in the mine. At last it was considered safe for him to risk the final stage of the journey to the frontier. Among bales of wool he was smuggled aboard a goods train bound for Delagoa Bay. Even at the last, Boer officials nearly spotted him, but the train, after 2½ days' halting travelling, crossed the frontier. Winston celebrated the occasion by raising his head above the tarpaulin to yell and sing a song of victory and let off his revolver in the air. Late the same afternoon he reached Lourenço Marques, was fed and clothed by the British Consul, feted by the British community, and sailed for Durban.

Returned to Durban, Winston was received with acclamation, and he learned for the first time that his exploits had made him famous in two continents. Indeed, in the full flow of tribute, the popular Press at home had turned on a torrent of gush, and this produced a secondary stream of defamation from those sections of Press and populace that can never bear to see merit praised. One paper wanted to know by what unwarrantable liberty he got on to the armoured train. Another accused him in escaping of having broken his parole.

It was Winston's first experience as a target for the mud-slingers—and it is curious to note how the mud-slingers throughout his career made him the target for their attacks.

Balancing praise against calumny left him, however, a credit definitely on the right side. And, anyway, Winston did not care very much for either. What was much more important, his exploits had commended him to the notice of the British Commander.

Like the father of the fairy princess whose life has been saved by the deserving young man, Sir Redvers Buller asked Winston: "Is there anything I can do for you?" to which Winston replied: "Give me a commission."

Now this was a difficult matter, for the correspondent of the *Morning Post* insisted that he must continue to report the war, and the War Office authorities, largely because of the writings in previous campaigns of this same officer-reporter, had put a peremptory stop on officers holding Press appointments. However, Sir Redvers was ready to get round the obstacle by agreeing to a commission in one of the irregular volunteer corps—"Bungo's

Regiment,' in command of Colonel Byng, who is known to history as Lord Byng of Vimy.

"You will," said Sir Redvers, "do what you can for both jobs, but you will be unpaid for ours."

So for a space Winston returned to the Army as Lieutenant in the South African Light Horse—the Cockyolibirds.

He was present at the relief of Ladysmith, and then got himself transferred to the main British Army under Lord Roberts. He followed the campaigns in the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, and took particular pleasure in the entry into Pretoria, where he made a point of being among the first to release his former fellow-prisoners of war. Then, after taking part in the action of Diamond Hill, he decided to return home to new operations in the political field.

He reached England in time to be present at his mother's wedding to Cornwallis West.

## CHAPTER V

### *Conservative M.P.*

WHEN the tide of war began to change in South Africa with the fall of Johannesburg and Pretoria and the Relief of Ladysmith and Mafeking, the Government at home decided to gain what electoral benefit they could from the improving situation.

Young Mr. Winston Churchill, on returning to the country in the late summer of the year 1900, found the Khaki Election already in progress. Without loss of time he plunged himself into the campaign.

The Parliament that was about to be elected, the first of the twentieth century, was also the last of that venerable sovereign, Queen Victoria, whose long life was drawing to its close.

The Prime Minister and Conservative leader was the Queen's ancient servitor, the Marquess of Salisbury, the last of the great landed proprietors to hold office as the first Minister of the Crown. He had succeeded Disraeli in the Party leadership and except for a break from 1892-95 had been Prime Minister since 1885, conducting affairs with the assistance of his nephews of the House of Cecil. Of these the principal was Arthur James Balfour his uncle's chief lieutenant in the lower House.

It was the same Lord Salisbury with whom Lord Randolph Churchill had had his fateful quarrel. And it was the same Arthur

Balfour who had been Lord Randolph's collaborator in the brilliant days of the Fourth Party.

Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour were the hereditary leaders of Conservatism, but the most powerful force in the Government ranks was Joseph Chamberlain, dictator of Birmingham, father of the two statesmen of our own time—Sir Austen, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary, and Neville, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister.

'Old Joe,' though he failed to reach the position gained by his younger son, was a greater political personality than either of them. For all their attainments they did not succeed in dominating the political scene in the manner of their father, whose ascendancy was derived from sheer elemental force of character.

In Gladstone's day 'Radical Joe' had split the Liberal Party over Home Rule. With the Liberal Unionists he had joined forces with the Tories and now this Radical turned Imperialist sat on the Treasury Bench as Colonial Secretary.

In those days the office was considered to be a reward for second-rate politicians, but Joseph Chamberlain brought a new importance to it. He was recognized as the most prominent member of the Conservative administration to which he contributed in equal measure a feeling of strength and insecurity—strength from the force of his support, insecurity from the uncertainty as to where his incalculable inspiration might lead the party.

When the war in South Africa opened in the manner traditional for British armies and the despised Boers inflicted a series of reverses on our troops, the utmost anxiety prevailed at home. Discontent was general with our leadership in the field and in the Government. The Liberals, had they been in a position to exploit the situation, might have inflicted a decisive defeat on the Salisbury administration, but they were in no wise able to take advantage of the opponent's weakness.

The Liberals were then at the height of one of their periodic indulgences in party schism. Weakened by the disruption over Home Rule and the withdrawal of the Chamberlainites, they had been riven again by the feuds that had followed the resignation of the aged Gladstone.

The Gladstonian mantle fell upon the patrician Rosebery, but his brief Premiership was a time of vexation and frustration, and intrigue. Not long after he was dismissed from office, he threw up the party leadership and like a political Agamemnon sulking in his tent withdrew to the solitude of his own tabernacle.

The Boer War came to accentuate the divisions between Liberal Imperialists and the Radical, Little Englander wing. The former, led by Asquith, Grey and Haldane, were ready to support the war, while critical of the conduct of it. Others were out-and-out

opponents of the war, and the chief of these was a young solicitor from Wales, by name David Lloyd George.

In the Khaki Election, the Conservative electoral tactics were of utmost simplicity.

The Government appealed to the country for a mandate to bring the war to a successful conclusion. They classed their political opponents of every description under the all-embracing title of Pro-Boer. In the effective slogan of Joseph Chamberlain, "Every seat lost by the Government is a seat lost to the Boers."

Returning to England from the front, Winston found the election under way and himself the man of the hour.

Eleven constituencies solicited the honour of his candidature, but though Oldham had been the scene of his discomfiture, and though the prospects of victory were by no means assured, he resolved to give Oldham a chance to rectify its previous error.

It would be difficult to imagine a greater contrast in political fortunes than between the circumstances of the young candidate at his first attempt in 1899 and at his second in 1900. Then he was an unknown young man of aristocrat connexions but nothing much more to commend him. Now he was one of the best known and most popular men in England. His exploits in the war in South Africa had been well publicized. In young Winston the people could find an object on which to expend their will to hero-worship.

Winston entered Oldham to the tune of 'The Conquering Hero' with the bands playing, flags flying and crowds cheering. He drove through the street in an open carriage, proclaimed in the slogan of one electoral banner as 'England's Noblest Hero.'

Such was the laudation showered upon the young man that a Liberal newspaper could write : "Oldham appears to be in some doubt whether it was Lord Roberts, Mr. Winston Churchill or Bill Adams that took Pretoria."

The Lancashire Liberals were not daunted by the magic of his personality, and made him fight every inch of the way. It was a campaign which a young man of action could relish to the full.

One priceless advantage was his—he had himself participated in the war which was the chief subject of contention between the parties. His political position was clear cut.

"I was nearly," he said, "a peace-at-any-price man up to the time of the declaration of the war. After that I was a victory-at-any-price man."

His opponents, whom he had met the year before, Mr. Emmott and Mr. Runciman, were Liberal Imperialists, and offered an easy target. The contest, Mr. Churchill declared, was between "the turtle soup of Tory Imperialism and the mock turtle soup of Liberal Imperialism."

Mr. Emmott and Mr. Runciman agreed that the war was a just

war. They denounced Kruger and disclaimed all connection with the pro-Boers. In that event, Mr. Churchill inquired, why were they opposing the Government?

"The Liberals," he said, "have no policy of their own and find no fault with our policy except that they would like to carry it out."

The great Joseph Chamberlain came to Oldham to speak in support of the young candidate, and the name of Joseph Chamberlain was one to conjure with amongst the Conservative working classes.

Mr. Churchill was fortunate that he could count upon such support, and he received a commendation that at once pleased him, and impressed the citizens of Oldham. "I think," declared Mr. Chamberlain, "that Lord Randolph's son has inherited some of the great qualities of his father—his originality and his courage."

Courage—you might have thought that a man with young Churchill's record behind him would not have needed a commendation on that score; but in the heat of the Khaki Election, wild charges were made, and even his courage was called in question. He was accused of personal cowardice, of having left his fellow-prisoners in the lurch at Pretoria.

One of the fellow-prisoners at once came forward to expose that particular lie, and to state emphatically that there was no truth in the accusation. Mr. Churchill was also able to produce the testimony of Sir Evelyn Wood, the Adjutant-General, who wrote, "The officer who was in command of the train which was captured by the Boers with all its occupants, reported highly on the decision and marked courage which you showed on that occasion when, at his request, you assumed temporarily the position of an officer."

It was a hard fight for Oldham and victory was hardly won. When the result of this two-member seat was declared, it was found that Mr. Emmott was again at the top of the poll and Mr. Churchill was second, leading Mr. Runciman by the slender margin of 222 votes.

The young member's delight was unbounded. Congratulations showered upon him. He was the most sought-after man of the moment.

In those days polling in a General Election did not take place throughout the country on the same day, but was spread over a number of days. The results first to be declared had a considerable influence on the polls which were still to take place.

The first successes, indicating the way in which the tide was flowing, served to accentuate the flowing of the tide, for there is a certain satisfaction to the wavering voter to find himself on the winning side.

Oldham was almost the first constituency to poll and the victorious young Conservative received summonses from all parts of the country to speak for fellow Conservatives at their final meetings.

He hurried off to Birmingham to return the support he had received from Mr. Chamberlain, and on the way received an appeal to speak at Manchester on behalf of Mr. Balfour, the Leader of the Party in the House of Commons. There, indeed, was a tribute to delight the young M.P.—the two chief figures in the party soliciting the favour of his support.

The eloquence of the young Member for Oldham contributed no little to his party's success. The Khaki Election firmly established the Conservatives in office for a further term, and before going to Westminster to take his seat, Mr. Churchill went off on a lecturing tour in this country, and then across the Atlantic to the United States and Canada. Everywhere his fame preceded him, and the tour enhanced his reputation. It had the further advantage of setting his finances on a firm footing, and he had the comfortable feeling to be derived from a sum of £10,000 safely invested.

In the New Year, Mr. Churchill had to make his début in the House.

Even accomplished orators of experience confess to certain nervousness before rising to address an assembly which is the most critical in the world.

Nervousness has never been one of Mr. Churchill's qualities, but nervous he was when the time came for him to deliver his maiden speech. His concern was the greater as he had a reputation to live up to, but this did not deter him from speaking at the first chance that was offered.

The Session, which opened on 23 January, 1901, was not more than four days old when he was seeking Mr. Speaker's eye.

South Africa and the war was the subject of debate, and no one knew more of South Africa and the war from first-hand experience than the junior member for Oldham.

His speech had to be prepared in advance, for in those days he could only deliver himself of orations that he had prepared and learnt by memory. It is a form of oratory that is not well suited to the cut and thrust of debate, but it was a sheer impossibility for him to address the House in any other way. All he could hope for was to improvise an introductory sentence or two by which to introduce his carefully prepared eloquence.

The fateful night arrived. Encouraged by friends, who said that now was his chance, and not dissuaded by others who urged that it was too soon, Mr. Churchill took his seat behind the Conservative front bench, next to that Parliamentary veteran, Mr. Gibson Bowles, and waited for his turn to rise.

It had been arranged that he should follow the Member for Carnarvon Boroughs, that young Welshman Lloyd George, who had already laid the foundations of a Parliamentary career, but whose promise scarcely betokened the brilliance that was yet to come.

Lloyd George had tabled an amendment, which seemed to provide Mr. Churchill with an easy approach for his speech but for some reason he did not choose to move it. So Mr. Churchill saw his opening spoiled.

As Lloyd George spoke, the Member for Oldham could have been seen hurriedly drafting alternative exordiums, but each in turn became unsuitable as the Welshman's speech proceeded. Then with the words that he knew the House would wish him to be brief, because it was waiting to hear the new member who was to follow, Lloyd George sat down.

Mr. Speaker called on the Member for Oldham. Mr. Churchill must rise, though he had not yet found the initial sentence without which the speech he had prepared could not be launched.

It was a terrible dilemma, and the whole course of his career, even of history itself, might have been changed, had not that veteran of debate been sitting at his side. In a whisper, Mr. Bowles suggested, "You might say—instead of making his violent speech, without moving his moderate amendment, the Member for Carnarvon had better have moved his moderate amendment without making his violent speech."

Mr. Churchill accepted the improvisation. It was just the phrase needed to start him on his way. The failure which had threatened to overwhelm him a moment before was averted. The magic formula delivered, he was on safe ground.

The debate had turned on the treatment of the Boers, with whom Liberal Members of the Government had expressed sympathy, because of the manner in which their farms had been burned. Mr. Churchill began by saying that he did not think the Boers were likely to over-value those expressions of sympathy—no people had received so much verbal sympathy, and so little practical support.

"From what I saw of the war in South Africa, and I saw something of it," Mr. Churchill went on, "I believe that as compared with other wars, especially those in which a civil population took part, it has been on the whole conducted with unusual humanity and generosity. The immediate policy of the Government should be to make it easy and honourable for the Boers to surrender and painful and perilous for them to continue in the field."

There was a note of sympathy in the speech which raised it above the level of the ultra-patriotic declamations of the platform. The Boers he termed "brave and unhappy men."

They should, he urged, be beaten in the field, and made to recognize that their smaller independence must be merged in the larger liberties of the British Empire. Then there should be a full guarantee for the security of their religion and property, an assurance of equal rights, promise of representative institutions and last of all,

but not least of all, what the British Army would most readily accord to a brave and enduring foe—all the honours of war.

The war ended, what then? "I have," said Mr. Churchill, "travelled a great deal about South Africa during the last ten months, and I should like to lay before you some of the considerations which have been forcibly borne upon me during that period." He argued that an administrator such as Alfred Milner should be set at the head of the Civil Administration during the interim period before representative rights were granted. The speech concluded with a reference to the speaker's father.

"I cannot sit down," said Mr. Churchill, "without saying how grateful I am for the kindness and patience with which the House has heard me. It has been extended to me, I well know, not on my own account, but because of a splendid memory which many old Members still preserve."

So Mr. Churchill ended to the sound of applause from all quarters of the House. He had done well. He heard praise from the next speaker, a Liberal, Sir Robert Reid, afterwards to sit on the Woolsack as Lord Loreburn, who said, "I am sure the House is glad to recognize that the Honourable Member who has just sat down possesses the same courage which so distinguished Lord Randolph Churchill during his short and brilliant career in this House. I have listened with great pleasure to the Honourable Gentleman."

From his own side of the House, Mr. Churchill received the tribute of Joseph Chamberlain, who found in the admirable speech an indication "that we may see the father repeated in the son." That Mr. Chamberlain should have particular praise for the son of a famous man was to be expected, for had not he a father's pride? There was his own son Austen, who was to fill all posts except the very highest, and Neville, who was to reach the highest post of all, that Joseph Chamberlain coveted, but never attained.

On the following day, the voice of Asquith was heard from the Liberal benches praising the interesting speech, which "we must all hope and believe and especially those of us who, like myself, enjoyed the friendship of his illustrious father, is the first speech in a Parliamentary career of the highest distinction."

The tributes were encouraging to the young member, but perhaps of greater importance was the acquaintance which the speech brought about with the Member for Carnarvon. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Churchill were introduced at the Bar of the House and this began, as Mr. Churchill has said, an association which has persisted through many vicissitudes.

## CHAPTER VI

*The Tattered Flag*

WITH his maiden speech creditably delivered, Winston Churchill could afford to sit back to study the strategic position and the way to fame.

The aspirant to honours in the House has two courses open to him. The easiest way to place is the safe game of follow-the-party-leaders and obedience to the party whips. Having marched through the right division lobby with becoming docility for the qualifying period of years, the M.P. becomes known as a safe party man. If he can show the necessary modicum of talents, promotion to junior office will at last reward his political devotion.

Winston Churchill gave early indication that the safe way was not going to be his. The subaltern who had lectured the Generals was now the junior M.P. who was ready to state a policy for Ministers. South Africa was the subject for his first demonstration of independence.

Ministers had expected that with the fall of Ladysmith and Pretoria the collapse of the Boers would quickly follow, but in this they underrated the tenacity of the enemy. The campaign dragged on.

As a means of inducing the Boers to cease resistance, the Government issued a proclamation that every Boer leader who did not surrender within a month would be banished for life. This brought Winston into open revolt. "I do not think," he declared, "that this is either a very wise move or one that is likely materially to improve the chances of victory and peace in South Africa."

More vigour in the field was his demand. He called for the despatch of an overwhelming force to South Africa, better equipped and of greater mobility.

These were demands that might have proceeded from the Opposition front bench had not the occupants been paralysed by their own divisions.

In his second year as member, young Churchill openly allied himself with an Opposition motion.

A Mr. Cartwright, editor of a South African paper, had been sent to prison a year previously for publishing a seditious libel—that Kitchener had issued secret instructions to the troops to take no prisoners. On the conclusion of his year's sentence he proposed to return to England, but the military authorities refused to let him leave South Africa.

Liberals regarded this as unwarrantably harsh treatment of a man who had purged his offence, and dangerous tampering with the principles of personal liberty. John Morley raised the question in the House. Receiving an unsatisfactory reply, he sought to move the adjournment to draw attention to the case.

The junior member for Oldham rose to support the motion for the adjournment in a speech in which he protested against the violation of the liberty of the subject and constitution.

It was, he said, monstrous that the military authorities should dictate who should be free and what opinions should be expressed in England. There were some on that side of the House who were not prepared to see a great constitutional principle violated, not perhaps with deliberate intent but simply because those who administered the law had got used to an over-exercise of power.

It was not playing the party game for a Conservative member to support a Liberal motion.

Over South Africa, Winston showed his prentice hand. Army Reform enabled him to give a clearer indication of the metal of which he was made. It enabled him, too, to raise his father's tattered flag and to avenge his father's memory.

Army Reform was the province of the Secretary for War, Mr. St. John Brodrick, who is better remembered under the title of Lord Midleton.

In the light of deficiencies disclosed in South Africa, Mr. Brodrick wanted to reorganize and extend the Army by constituting six Army Corps on the continental model, of which three corps of 120,000 men would be ready for foreign service at immediate notice. It was a vast project looked at in the opening years of the century, before the menace of world war had made men think of armies on an altogether vaster scale.

The proposals, outlined by Mr. Brodrick in a speech which only temporarily concealed the vagueness of the measures he was proposing, gave rise to doubts. Winston Churchill came forward to pronounce upon the plan with devastating criticism. He succeeded at once in establishing his Parliamentary reputation and avenging Lord Randolph.

To appreciate the situation you must go back for a moment into Parliamentary history. Thirty years before, that is to say in the early 'Seventies, Lord Randolph was the *enfant terrible* of the Conservative Party. The Conservative leaders in those days were venerable and sedate men. As the son of a Duke, Lord Randolph might have been expected to qualify as one of the same august circle, but an excess of spirits and original sin caused him to attack and ridicule those ponderous respectabilities—bearding the goats was the name he gave to the diversion.

Three other Conservative back benchers joined him in the game

of attacking Gladstone and imparting some vigour to their own party —A. J. Balfour, Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and Sir John Gorst. This quartette formed the Fourth Party, and their attacks were carried out with such brilliance that they are still remembered at Westminster though it is over sixty years since they co-operated to enliven the dullness of debate.

Lord Randolph may have begun in jest but he continued in earnest with the avowed aim of making the Conservative programme more liberal and popular, one that would appeal to the masses, more of whom, Parliament by Parliament, were being given the right to vote. In the 'Eighties he was the champion of Tory Democracy, acknowledged leader of the Conservative working man.

"I cannot, here, tell the story of how he came to capture the party organization from its leader—it is divertingly told in the son's biography. But 'Randy' forced himself into the Cabinet and Lord Salisbury ultimately appointed him Chancellor of the Exchequer. It looked as if Lord Randolph must one day become Prime Minister.

Promotion to high office did not tame him as it does many of those who start out as firebrands and reformers and end their days as pillars of the Party and the State. Inside the Cabinet he continued to strive for social reform.

To secure the finances necessary for the end he advocated economies in other directions and demanded that the estimates of expenditure for the Army and the Navy should be considerably reduced. When the Cabinet overruled him, he flung his resignation at Lord Salisbury's head, imagining himself to be indispensable as Chancellor to a Government that was not rich in talent. It was a political miscalculation ; he had forgotten Goschen. Lord Salisbury accepted the resignation and appointed Goschen to the Treasury. 'Randy' had to go.

It was the end of his career. Not long afterwards his health broke down, and in his final days in the House the man who had delighted members by his shafts of wit was unable to complete his sentences.

Winston held his father's memory dear. He conceived it his duty at once to carry on his father's work and to avenge his father's fall.

The Brodrick Army Reform proposals gave him the opportunity.

Two months were allowed for the discussion of the Brodrick scheme. The first challenge came from Winston Churchill, who gave notice of an amendment :

*"That this House, while fully recognizing the necessity of providing adequately for Imperial defence and the plain need for extensive reforms in the organization and system of the Army, nevertheless cannot view without grave apprehension the continual growth of purely military expenditure, which*

*diverts the energies of the country from their natural commercial and naval development ; and having regard to the extraordinary pressure under which all connected with the War Office are now working, desires to postpone final decision on future military policy until calmer times.”*

The inspiration of the amendment was clear. As one old Parliamentary hand observed : “It is as if Lord Randolph has risen from his grave and answered with his own voice, for this is the identical issue which wrecked his career.”

This act of political insubordination was not pleasing to the party.

*The Times*, recognizing the inspiration of the father, disowned the son. “Mr. Winston Churchill,” the Thunderer pronounced, “repeats again the most disastrous mistake of his father’s career.”

The son heeded not the Thunderer but proceeded with his attack. His amendment had to give way to official motion of the Opposition moved by the Liberal leader, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, but it was the speech of the young Conservative rebel that was the principal feature of the debate.

Forty years have passed since that speech was delivered on 12 May, 1901, but despite the lapse of time it can still be read with interest—and that could not be said of one political speech in a thousand. It can be read for its felicity in phrase and skill in argument, and it can be read as a first indication of the abilities of its author.

The speech of the very young M.P. of forty years ago would not disgrace the Prime Minister of to-day. There is no mistaking the mint from which it came. The style then and to-day is the same. There is the same clarity, the same dexterity in phrasing, the same punch in disposing of an opponent.

At first sight it may seem strange that the ‘prentice hand and the matured speaker should have so close a resemblance. On reflection it will appear that this continuity over the years attests the essential rightness of the style, faithfully reflecting the character of the speaker. The unchanging style betokens the unchanged quality of the man.

Winston was then only 26 years of age. He had been a member of the House of Commons for under a year. He spoke with the assurance and authority of a Parliamentary veteran, though with proper depreciation he confessed himself to be a very young man.

The Brodrick scheme of Army Reorganization was judged by appeal to the highest principles. Winston invited the House to take a wider view of Army Reform than was possible from the windows of the War Office, and to consider army expenditure in the light of national economy ; army strength in the light of continental army strengths ; and the place of the army in Imperial defence in the light of our naval power.

At the outset Winston identified himself with his father’s

arguments. It was an astute and effective device. The House was propitiated by the mark of filial respect and the young speaker gained the added advantage that the words of Winston the son became invested with something of the posthumous authority of Lord Randolph the father.

"If," he said, "I might be allowed to revive a half-forgotten episode—it is half-forgotten because it has passed into that period of twilight which intervenes between the bright glare of newspaper controversy and the calm light of history—I would recall that once upon a time a Conservative and Unionist Administration came into power supported by a majority, nearly as powerful, and much more cohesive, than that which now supports His Majesty's Government. When the time came round to consider the Estimates, what used to be the annual struggle took place between the great spending Departments and the Treasury.

"The Government of the day threw their weight on the side of the great spending Departments, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer resigned. The controversy was bitter, the struggle uncertain, but in the end the Government triumphed, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer went down for ever, and with him, as it now seems, there fell also the cause of retrenchment and economy, so that the very memory thereof seems to have perished, and the words themselves have a curiously old-fashioned ring about them. I suppose that was a lesson which Chancellors of the Exchequer are not likely to forget in a hurry.

"I am very glad the House has allowed me, after an interval of fifteen years, to lift again the tattered flag I found lying on a stricken field . . .

"I stand here to plead the cause of economy. I think it is time that a voice was heard from this side of the House pleading that unpopular cause ; that some one not on the benches opposite, but a Conservative by tradition, whose fortunes are strongly linked to the Tory party, who knows something of the majesty and power of Britain beyond the seas, upon whom rests no taint of cosmopolitanism, should stand forward and say what he can to protest against the policy of daily increasing the public burdens. If such a one is to stand forward in such a cause, then, I say it humbly, but with, I hope, becoming pride, no one has a better right than I have, for this is a cause I have inherited, and a cause for which the late Lord Randolph Churchill made the greatest sacrifice of any Minister of modern times."

Having thus placed himself before the House as the heir to his father's politics, Winston indulged himself by flinging a few oratorical brickbats at Mr. Brodrick. The Secretary of State was told that he held an office whose occupant does not usually direct or even powerfully influence the policy of a Government. His scheme, he was

assured, which had looked so attractive at its conception had been sadly knocked about. It had been crushed in the Press, exploded in the magazines, and had excited nothing but doubt in the country. As to what the soldiers thought about it—Winston did not feel equal to voicing their expressions on the floor of the House but he would be “delighted to inform any hon. member desiring information privately.”

Three Army corps to be kept ready for expeditionary purposes ? No ! The proposed three should be reduced to two on the ground that “one is quite enough to fight savages and three are not enough to begin to fight Europeans.”

By way of this felicitous phrase Winston passed on to warn the House of the magnitude of the scale of modern war. His words within a few years were proved to be fatally prophetic. To-day we are, alas, but too conscious of what Continental warfare means for the nations that are involved. Forty years ago our fathers lived in happy ignorance of the devastating consequences. The Boer War was fought in the comfortable remoteness of South Africa. Though many a family suffered bereavement, the operations provided no indication of the way in which war between peoples involves every phase of national existence.

Winston, the young man of 26, had the gift of prophetic insight. His words in that debate in the year 1901 showed how instinctive is his knowledge of war. The passage is worthy to be quoted in full:

“The enormous and varied frontiers of the Empire, and our many points of contact with barbarous peoples, will surely in the future, as in the past, draw us into frequent little wars. Our military system must therefore be adapted for dealing with these minor emergencies, smoothly and conveniently. But we must not expect to meet the great civilized Powers in this easy fashion. We must not regard war with a modern Power as a kind of game in which we may take a hand, and with good luck and good management may play adroitly for an evening and come safe home with our winnings. It is not that, and I rejoice that it cannot be that.

“A European war cannot be anything but a cruel, heartrending struggle, which, if we are ever to enjoy the bitter fruits of victory, must demand, perhaps for several years, the whole manhood of the nation, the entire suspension of peaceful industries, and the concentrating to one end of every vital energy in the community.

“I have frequently been astonished since I have been in this House to hear with what composure and how glibly Members, and even Ministers, talk of a European War. I will not expatiate on the horrors of war, but there has been a great change which the House should not omit to notice. In former days, when wars arose from individual causes, from the policy of a Minister or the passion of a

King, when they were fought by small regular armies of professional soldiers, and when their course was retarded by the difficulties of communication and supply, and often suspended by the winter season, it was possible to limit the liabilities of the combatants. But now, when mighty populations are impelled against each other, each individual severally embittered and inflamed—when the resources of science and civilization sweep away everything that might mitigate their fury, a European war can only end in the ruin of the vanquished and the scarcely less fatal commercial dislocation and exhaustion of the conquerors. Democracy is more vindictive than Cabinets. The wars of peoples will be more terrible than those of kings.

"‘Why then,’ it may be said, ‘surely we must neglect nothing to make ourselves secure. Let us vote this thirty millions without more ado.’

“Sir, if this vast expenditure on the Army were going to make us absolutely secure—much though I hate unproductive expenditure—I would not complain. But it will do no such thing. The Secretary for War knows—none better than he—that it will not make us secure, and that if we went to war with any great Power his three army corps would scarcely serve as a vanguard. If we are hated, they will not make us loved. If we are in danger, they will not make us safe. They are enough to irritate ; they are not enough to overawe. Yet, while they cannot make us invulnerable, they may very likely make us venturesome.”

Next Winston dealt with the role of the Navy in Imperial defence. Again, the words were prophetic. Here in his second speech to the House he was emphasizing the role the Navy would play in the defence of the Empire—a role that was to be prepared and undertaken under his direction.

The honour and security of the British Empire, he declared, do not depend and can never depend on the British Army. The Admiralty is the only office strong enough to insure the British Empire, and it can only be strong enough to do so because it has hitherto enjoyed the preferential monopoly of the sea.

“The only weapon,” he went on, “with which we can expect to cope with the great nations is the Navy. This is what the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant (Mr. Wyndham) calls the ‘trust to luck and the Navy’ policy. I confess I do trust the Navy. This new distrust of the Navy, this kind of shrinking from our natural element, the blue water on which we have ruled so long, is the most painful symptom of the military hydrophobia with which we are afflicted. Without a supreme Navy, whatever military arrangements we may make, whether for foreign expeditions or home defence, must be utterly vain and futile. With such a Navy we may hold any antagonist at arm’s length and feed ourselves in the meantime, until,

if we find it necessary, we can turn every city in the country into an arsenal, and the whole male population into an army.

"Sir, the superiority of the Navy is vital to our national existence. That has been said before. No one will deny that or thank me for repeating the obvious. Yet this tremendous Army expenditure directly challenges the principle, and those who advocate it are false to the principle they so loudly proclaim. For the main reason that enables us to maintain the finest Navy in the world is that whereas every European Power has to support a vast Army first of all, we in this fortunate, happy island, relieved by our insular position of a double burden, may turn our undivided efforts and attention to the Fleet.

"Why should we sacrifice a game in which we are sure to win to play a game in which we are bound to lose? For the same rule most certainly has a converse application; and just as foreign Powers by reason of their pressing land responsibilities must be inferior to us at sea, so we, whatever our effort, whatever our expenditure, by reason of our paramount sea responsibilities, must be inferior to them on land. And surely to adopt the double policy of equal effort both on Army and Navy, of spending thirty millions a year on each, is to combine the disadvantages and dangers of all courses without the advantages or security of any, and to run the risk of crashing to the ground between two stools, with a Navy dangerously weak and an Army dangerously strong."

From that passage I would ask you to look again at the forecast "with such a Navy we may hold any antagonist at arm's length and feed ourselves in the meantime, until, if we find it necessary, we can turn every city in the country into an arsenal, and the whole male population into an army." The prophet again. Twice in a score of years he was destined to see prophecy fulfilled, to see himself at the head of a Navy discharging its vital function of keeping the antagonist at bay while every city in the country was turned into an arsenal and the whole male population into an army. How many M.P.s aged 26 and with less than a year's membership of the House have been gifted with such prophetic insight? But, then, how many M.P.s have by nature been men of war?

In an eloquent peroration Winston made his final protest against the scheme of Mr. Brodrick and proclaimed his faith in what he termed the moral force of the British people:

"From the highest sentimental reasons, not less than from the most ordinary practical considerations, we must avoid a servile imitation of the clanking military empires of the European continent, by which we can never obtain the military predominance and security which is desired, but may only impair and vitiate the natural sources of our strength and vigour.

"There is a higher reason still. There is a moral force which, as the human race advances, will more and more strengthen and protect those nations who enjoy it ; which would have protected the Boers better than all their cannon and their brave commandos, if, instead of being ignorant, aggressive, and corrupt, they had enjoyed that high moral reputation which protected us in the dark days of the war from European interference—for, in spite of every calumny and lie uttered or printed, the truth comes to the top ; and it is known, alike by peoples and rulers, that upon the whole, and it is upon the whole that we must judge these things, British influence is a healthy and kindly influence, and makes for the general happiness and welfare of mankind. And we shall make a fatal bargain if we allow the moral force which this country has so long exerted to become diminished, or perhaps destroyed, for the sake of the costly, trumpery, dangerous military playthings on which the Secretary of State for War has set his heart."

Such was the first considerable speech which Winston Churchill addressed to the House of Commons. I have quoted from it at length to show the quality of the speaker revealed at the very outset of his Parliamentary career.

There was an immediate outcry from the Conservative ranks at the temerity of the young rebel from Oldham. Criticism was not soothed by the prediction in a Liberal paper that the critic of Mr. Brodrick would one day be Liberal Prime Minister of England.

When the debate continued the following day, Mr. Brodrick's critic received as much attention as Mr. Brodrick's scheme. Mr. Churchill was rebuked by Mr. Arthur Lee (later Lord Lee of Fareham), who thought that this was not the time to parade or pursue family traditions. Mr. Dillon, the Irish Nationalist, considered that Lord Randolph never did a better thing than his son had done the previous night—"and I have never seen a young Member of the House spring so suddenly and decisively to the front of debate."

Mr. Brodrick himself descended upon the Member for Oldham with ponderous rebuke. "I hope," he said, "in fact, I confidently expect, that Parliament, which was not afraid to part company with a brilliant statesman in 1886, will not be the less severe because of the financial heroics of my Honourable Friend. Those of us who disagree with him can only hope that the time will come when his judgment will grow up to his ability."

Mr. Brodrick might utter his rebukes, but Mr. Churchill emerged the victor. For two years the Brodrick scheme was under debate and for two years Winston heaped his criticisms upon it with vigour and resource.

I cannot refrain from giving yet one more illustration of

Winston's parliamentary style when he was still in his novitiate as politician. He enjoyed himself hugely as the critic and tormentor of the unfortunate Mr. Brodrick and it is a pity that the wit with which his attacks were enlivened should be entirely forgotten in the limbo of the Parliamentary debates.

In his address to the electors of Wallsend in February, 1903, he dealt with the progress or lack of progress in transforming the Brodrick scheme from blue prints to practice. His main charge was that though the taxpayers were paying for the whole of the six Army Corps which were to form the new divisions, the greater part of the strength of the Corps had not yet got beyond the paper stage.

"While," he said, "the Fourth Army Corps has got its general, the General has not yet got his Army Corps—though I observe from the papers that he is to take up his command on the first of April. As for the two remaining Army Corps, they are still in the air, organized, apparently, on the Marconi system.

"Now I come to what is in some ways an even more serious charge. It is what is called 'throwing dust in the eyes of the public,' and because it is such an expensive process I will call it throwing gold dust in the eyes of the public. Nearly four months ago you might have read in the newspapers an official *communiqué* from the War Office to this effect : 'General Bruce Hamilton is appointed to command the Third Division of the First Army Corps.' 'Ah,' says 'the Man in the Street' when he reads this, 'what did I tell you ? There is Mr. Brodrick persevering, in spite of so much criticism, with his great Army Corps scheme. Here is a popular South African General appointed to one of the most important commands.'

"But what the public do not see—unless it is pointed out for them by inconvenient and tiresome people like me—is that this same General has no division to command at all, because there is no Third Division of the First Army Corps yet formed. Nor is there likely to be one for a long time to come, and General Bruce Hamilton, instead of being at the head of eighteen guns and 10,000 infantry, may go away and amuse himself on leave with the satisfaction of knowing that his name is being exploited for a purely political purpose, namely, to make believe that Mr. Brodrick's scheme is much further advanced than it really is or is likely to be. I do not hesitate to say that there are numerous cases of officers, particularly popular officers, being appointed to commands which either do not exist or only partially exist, and I characterize these methods as wasteful and uncandid, and as throwing gold dust in the eyes of the public.

"I dare say some of you have read a book called *The Phantom Millions*, or the story of the great French fraud. It describes in very eloquent language how a number of people in France were induced to lend huge sums of money on the security of a safe which was

supposed to contain millions of pounds. For a long time they were kept quiet by all kinds of paper promises and all kinds of legal dodges ; but at last the end came. The farce could not be kept up any longer. The safe was opened by the indignant creditors, and inside they found—nothing but a few brass buttons and a few worthless bits of paper.

"No doubt when you read that story you could not help feeling that these French people must have been very simple and even silly to be taken in like that ; and with that sense of superiority which it is one of our national characteristics often to feel, you felt inclined to say, 'That may be all very well in France, but it could never happen over here in England. We are much too shrewd.' Do not be too sure about that.

"Sometimes lately when I have watched the proceedings of the War Office, their desperate attempts to increase the paper strength of the Army by any means, whether by enlisting immature boys or 'specials', or 'flatfoots' who cannot march, or by creation of phantom Army Corps—just about as real as the Humbert millions, or by the appointments of distinguished South African generals whose names will go down well with the public, to command brigades and divisions which do not exist, I have felt convinced that the great French fraud at which we have been so amused, is merely a poor, wretched, private concern compared to the great English fraud which the War Office is perpetrating every day.

"What do you think you will find in the War Office safe on the day when it is opened ? You have advanced vast sums of money on it—thirty millions a year—ten millions a year more than you ever paid before. Some of that money is raised by the taxation of very poor people. You believe that the safe contains an efficient and economical Army, suited to your needs, proportioned to your resources, and what will you find ? You will find a few brass buttons—made in Germany—and a few worthless bits of paper on which are written the names of the brigades and the divisions which make up Mr. Brodrick's *papier maché* Army scheme."

At last the grandiose Brodrick scheme for Army reform perished. Reform had to wait until Haldane became War Minister. Mr. Brodrick retreated from the War Office to the comparative safety of the affairs of India.

Lord Randolph was indeed avenged.

Winston in those days was always reminding the House of 'Randy'. When he was speaking he could be observed to be fingering the plain gold signet ring which Lord Randolph had worn. Those who had known the father were startled by the repetition of his mannerisms and attitudes in the son. There was the same stoop, the same gait, the same lurching movement in his walk. When he spoke he grasped the lapels of his coat just as his father did. Even

in frock-coat and large bow tie and even down to the shape of the collar there was a resemblance.

Winston was now passing through his Hughlighan days.

The Hughlighans were the discontented members of the Conservative Party, young, liberal-minded and progressive. We should call them now a ginger group, this party within a party, but they were styled Hughlighans from their distinguished member Lord Hugh Cecil (now Lord Quickswood), who long since repented of the error of challenging authority and became concerned with securing the respect that is authority's due as Provost of Eton College. Lord Percy was another of the group, Mr. Arthur Stanley another—names that betoken long ancestry that should be a guarantee against political unorthodoxy.

Mr. Ian Malcolm, who was later to be Secretary for Ireland, also gave his name as an alternative title to this group of 'Malcolmtents.' Ivor Guest, afterwards Lord Wimborne, Winston's cousin, and Sir Gilbert Parker, the novelist, were other Hughlighans.

The adherence of Sir John Gorst provided a link with the historic past, for Sir John was a member of the Fourth Party, Parliamentary snipers of twenty years before, of whom the most distinguished was Lord Randolph Churchill.

They were less scintillating, perhaps, than the Fourth Party, these Hughlighans, but they carried heavier guns. Faithful Tories burst with indignation into print and denounced these disloyalists of the party. Never had they known an attack upon a Government organized and pressed with so much bitterness and apparent determination by members elected to support it.

And of all the Hughlighans, Winston Churchill was the most forceful in sniping at Arthur Balfour, languid philosopher on the Treasury Bench.

## CHAPTER VII

### *In Revolt*

IN the debate on Army Reform, Winston Churchill had gone a long way along the road of political independence. He had established himself as a parliamentary *franc-tireur*. But though he would not accept the lead of his party in all things, he was still within the party fold.

The next turn of the political wheel brought him to the parting of the ways.

When the year 1903 opened, the political barometer seemed to be set moderately fair. The Boer war was over. It had brought no great problems in its train. The Irish were comparatively quiescent. There were still rumblings of discontent over religious education in schools.

No great national issue for the moment divided the parties. It was the lull before the storm—the last lull before a succession of heated controversies that continued without a break and were in progress when the greater tempest of 1914 burst.

The storm of 1903 was produced by Joseph Chamberlain. Returning from a visit to South Africa he loosed upon the country a political bombshell, product of his ruminations on the veldt.

Addressing his Birmingham constituents in May, he declared himself to be in favour of a system of Imperial Preference designed to assist the producers of the Empire in meeting the competition of foreign production. This involved a radical change in our fiscal system and the abandonment of the principle of Free Trade, which had been our traditional policy since protection was abandoned sixty years before by Sir Robert Peel.

Joe Chamberlain advocated a complete break with the Free Trade past, calling not merely for taxes on imported food but for the employment of tariffs as a bargaining weapon with protectionist states.

The speech produced an entire transformation in the political scene. The attack on Free Trade served to bring immediate unity to the Liberals. Old feuds forgotten, they seized on the occasion which brought them together to fight for a cause on which they all agreed.

For the Conservatives, on the other hand, the Chamberlain bombshell had precisely the contrary effect. As the Liberals coalesced so the Conservative party disintegrated.

On the day of the Birmingham speech, Arthur Balfour, Premier by now, was defending the repeal of the Corn Duty decided upon by Mr. Ritchie, Chancellor of the Exchequer and an out-and-out Free Trader.

It was not long before the Chancellor, together with other Free Traders, had left the Cabinet rather than associate with the contamination of the Tariff advocates. Joe Chamberlain, too, found freedom necessary for the prosecution of his campaign and education of the electors.

Deprived in this manner of the co-operation in the Cabinet of the leaders of the opposing wings, Balfour was principally occupied for the remaining two years in which he was in power in labouring to find some means of compromise by which the party could be saved from the split that threatened to rend it. To neither protectionist nor Free Trade wing would he commit himself, but always he

searched for a magic formula which would enable the dissentient wings to continue to support the administration. Never was there a more brilliant exhibition of walking the political tight rope, but the alternative attacks from the rival flanks placed him in a series of predicaments.

Here was an ideal field for the parliamentary *franc-tireur*. Winston Churchill, richer from the experience of two sessions of Parliament, exploited the situation to the full.

In these later years we have not been much concerned about balancing the advantages and disadvantages of Protection and Free Trade. The world depression of the early 'Thirties enforced a peremptory settlement, and the son of Joseph Chamberlain carried out the policy which his father unsuccessfully championed. In 1903 young Winston was in no two minds about the evil of tariffs. To tamper with Free Trade was to trifle with political sin.

Free Trade, he declared, was to England not merely a right and logical policy but a bread-and-butter policy. To say that Protection meant a greater development of wealth was an economic absurdity and to say that it meant a fairer distribution of wealth was a downright lie.

"This move," he said, "means a change not only in historic English parties but in conditions of our public life. The old Conservative Party with its religious convictions and constitutional principles will disappear, and a new party will arise—rigid, materialistic and secular—whose opinions will turn on Tariffs and who will cause the Lobbies to be crowded with the touts of protected industries."

The Liberal leaders leapt to denounce what one of them termed "the reckless criminal escapade of old Joe's." But the Liberals were not more devastating in their attacks than was the junior Member for Oldham. Joseph Chamberlain stumped up and down the country in his raging, tearing campaign advocating Imperial Preference. Winston Churchill stumped up and down the country after him, pressing the case for Free Trade.

As soon as Birmingham had spoken Oldham replied and Winston carried the fight even to the Birmingham citadel. The Birmingham crowd might threaten the opponents of their political idol. Kruger's followers had been more threatening than old Joe's. The crowd that came to mob the Member for Oldham remained to cheer.

Old Joe made Tariffs the sole issue of the hour. He also made Winston Churchill a national figure in politics. The elder man might be a political giant, the younger was a not ineffective David. His oratorical stones might not have been fatal, but they were sorely troublesome.

His ability as a speaker grew with practice. So did his aptitude

for dealing with opponents, and the shafts of his ridicule became more pointed.

Mr. Brodrick, in his phrase, was a sufferer from German measles ; Arthur Balfour became a 'Sheffield Shuffler' ; Arnold Forster was dubbed a 'Jack in Office.' Chamberlain's patriotism was measured by the 'imperial pint' and the Tariff Reform League was that 'disreputable body' whose support was as fatal as prussic acid to candidates for Parliament.

A certain Colonel Kenyon-Slaney ventured to make a personal attack upon him. Winston's reply was devastating.

"I notice," he said, "that Colonel Kenyon-Slaney says that I and my hon. friend are renegades and traitors. I have often noticed that when political controversy becomes excited, persons of choleric disposition and limited intelligence are apt to become rude. Ladies and gentlemen, if I am a traitor, at any rate I was fighting the Boers in South Africa when Colonel Kenyon-Slaney was slandering them at home. My hon. friend and I had the honour of serving in the field for our country, while this gallant, fire-eating colonel was content to kill Kruger with his mouth in the comfortable security of England."

When the Free Trade Unionists left the Government, Arthur Balfour had an opportunity of at once silencing a damaging critic and securing a valuable recruit for the Ministry, by giving office to Winston. He made no such offer. Chamberlain recognized the blunder, even if Balfour did not. "Winston," he said to Mrs. Asquith, otherwise Margot, the diarist, "is the cleverest of all the young men and the mistake Arthur made was to let him go."

For a while Winston maintained his formal connection with the party, but the final break could not be long delayed when he called for Free Traders of all parties to form one line of battle against the common foe. When, in a public speech, he thanked God for the existence of the Liberal Party, Oldham Conservatives formally disowned him. But they dared not call upon him to resign ; they feared the verdict of the electors more than did he.

In the House Conservative members no longer cheered the Member for Oldham—indeed, there was one occasion, celebrated in the annals of Westminster, when they declined even to listen to him. Winston rose to indulge his favourite pastime of baiting the Conservative leaders, still nominally his own. He had not finished his opening sentence before a number of M.P.s left their seats and walked out. As he proceeded so did the exodus. Members who had passed through the doors could be seen through the glass panels beckoning to the men who remained. Gradually the audience dwindled and before he reached his peroration Winston was standing alone amidst empty benches on his side of the Chamber.

This marked the end of his connection with the Unionist Party.

A few evenings later he was discovered in a new seat—the corner of the front Opposition bench below the gangway. He had crossed the floor. The seat he had chosen was the one from which twenty years before his father had made his reputation by his attacks on Gladstone.

There were angry taunts from the young Conservatives seated around Joseph Chamberlain as Winston rose to speak. With hands on hips and head thrust forward in characteristic attitude of defiance, he flung his taunts at the aggressors. In this form of Parliamentary hostilities he could easily hold his own, but the contest soon reached the stage where brute power of lung outmatched felicity in repartee. There was no hearing the Member for Oldham above the din.

A new Labour member, Mr. Shackleton, protested. "Mr. Speaker," he said, "for the last ten minutes I have been endeavouring to listen to the speech of the hon. member and I have been unable to follow him. I think it is one of the privileges every hon. member is entitled to that he should be heard."

The Speaker replied that it was impossible for him to compel every member to keep silence, but he trusted that the rules of the House would be observed.

Winston made another attempt to deliver himself of his speech, but his remarks were lost amid what the official report described by the remarkable under-statement of 'continued interruptions.' Winston was heard to observe that he saw the Prime Minister was in his place : was it to be supposed that he was a consenting party to the uproar ? At this babel was renewed.

In a calmer moment, Winston appealed to the good sense of the House to say whether he was receiving fair treatment. Was this carefully organized attack on the liberties of debate, in which the Right Hon. Member for West Birmingham—designating Joseph Chamberlain—was an accomplice and consenting party . . .

The question was not completed. There were shouts of "Order" and "Withdraw." Old Joe sprang to his feet. "Mr. Speaker," he protested in his turn. "I rise on a point of order."

There were interruptions here from the opposition benches. "I merely wish to know," he went on amid shouts and counter-shouts, "whether it is in order for the junior member for Oldham to say that there is a conspiracy against him in which I am an accomplice—a statement which is absolutely untrue." This disclaimer was received with cries of "Oh ! Oh !" and "Order ! Order !"

The Speaker, thus appealed to, pronounced that the hon. member for Oldham should not make such charges.

"Withdraw," bawled the Conservatives.

Winston made a nicely-phrased withdrawal. "Mr. Speaker," he said, carefully choosing his words, "if I have said anything which

passes in any degree the limitation of the order of debate I completely withdraw it. I have made my protest which I venture to commit to the good sense and calmer consideration of the House."

Winston, in opposition, was separated by the floor from his Hughligan associates, but he had soon taken his place in a first-rate team of Liberal parliamentarians. Lloyd George was their unofficial leader. McKenna, later a pillar of the financial world, was another of the group, and so were Walter Runciman and Herbert Samuel, who were to sit in another and more decorous place. This band of Liberals, so we are assured by old Parliamentary hands, improved on 'Fourth Party' methods, and were the authors of the most virile opposition that the House had witnessed in living memory.

Snap divisions which, catching the ministerial supporters at a numerical disadvantage, might involve the Government in the discomfiture of a defeat, became a popular pastime, so that the Chief Government Whip, Acland Hood, the hunting squire, became the hardest-worked man in London. On one occasion Winston and his friends made a night of it on one of the Budget debates. Hour after hour they kept the discussion going and forced the Government back-benchers to tramp wearily through the Lobbies.

All the honours of the night did not go to Winston. Between six and seven o'clock in the morning Claude Lowther, one of the younger Conservatives, called the attention of the House to a report that the disease of beri-beri had broken out among the Chinese labourers in South Africa. He suggested that the member for Oldham was suffering from this malady. From the Chair, Claude Lowther was reminded that these observations had no bearing on the motion under discussion, at which he commented, "I bow entirely to your ruling, Sir, but I made that remark because I have heard that the most marked characteristic symptom of the disease is a terrific swelling of head."

It was twenty minutes to four in the afternoon before the Government completed its appointed business. Winston and his friends had kept the House in being for 25 hours.

Throughout the sessions of 1904 and 1905, Arthur Balfour continued his dexterous exhibition of sitting on the fiscal fence. In the country, Tariffs or Free Trade was the question of the hour. All attempts to raise the matter in Parliament were skilfully evaded. The House of Commons, as the veteran Gibson Bowles remarked, was "the only place on God's earth" where the matter could not be discussed.

Winston neglected no opportunity to add to the embarrassments of his ex-Leader. One evening when he was speaking, Balfour rose from his place and passed along the Front Bench towards the door.

In a flash came the gibe from Winston, "The right hon. gentleman need not go out. I am not going to talk about Free Trade."

On another occasion, when a fiscal debate was at length taking place, Balfour absented himself. Said Winston, "To keep in office for a few more weeks and months there is no principle which the Government are not prepared to abandon, no friend or colleague they are not prepared to betray, and no quantity of dust and filth they are not prepared to eat."

Only by evading the issue could Balfour prevent his Cabinet from breaking up. Ministers made little attempt to hide their differences. As Winston said, "Cabinet Ministers abuse, contradict and disavow each other. Members of the Government and of the Conservative Party fight over the Prime Minister as dogs worry over a bone."

At length, even the patience of Arthur Balfour broke under the continued strain of attempting to reconcile the irreconcilables in his party and he resigned office. Campbell-Bannerman formed a Liberal Ministry and Winston Churchill found a place in it as Parliamentary Secretary for the Colonies. His political apprenticeship was ended. At the age of 31, the youngest man in Europe had become a junior minister of the Crown.

Actually, Campbell-Bannerman had proposed that Winston should take the office of Financial Secretary to the Treasury. This is the foremost of the junior ministerial posts and its occupant may count on reaching the Cabinet at the first reshuffle in the Ministry. At that time, too, the salary was £500 a year more than that of an Under-Secretary. Winston, on setting this aside and asking to go to the Colonies, was wise, for on the affairs of South Africa he could speak with the authority of knowledge gained at first hand—and South Africa was going to be one of the principal matters of debate.

When he crossed the floor of the House, his action was criticized by old Parliamentary hands. Winston, they suggested, would now suffer the handicap of arousing the aversion that is always incurred by the man who turns his coat. He would also, in running for the prize of office, be brought into competition with many able men of his own age who, having been Liberals throughout their careers, would resent being set aside in favour of a later comer.

It may well be that the conferment of office did arouse a certain jealousy among the younger members of the party, but by the elders Winston was accepted as a valued colleague. By several he was received as a close friend, in particular by John Morley, biographer of Gladstone, and by Herbert Asquith, the coming man, already indicated as Campbell-Bannerman's successor.



*PHASE THE SECOND*

*The Liberal*

*Just his conceptions, natural and great ;  
His feelings strong, his words enforced with  
weight . . .  
View the whole scene, with critic judgment scan,  
And then deny him merit if you can.  
Where he falls short, 'tis Nature's fault alone ;  
Where he succeeds, the merit's all his own.*

CHARLES CHURCHILL, *The Rosciad.*

## CHAPTER I

### *Minister of the Crown*

IT was sheer zest for conflict that made Winston Churchill choose North-West Manchester as his next constituency. There were plenty of safe Liberal seats, which would have considered it a privilege to be represented in Parliament by the young Under-Secretary for the Colonies. Manchester North-West was a Tory stronghold, but for Churchill it had the attraction that a victory there would be the more resounding.

The former member, Sir William Houldsworth, had retired from politics and the Conservatives had chosen as their nominee an unknown man—a busy young solicitor, Joynson Hicks by name, afterwards Viscount Brentford, or more affectionately ‘Jix.’ He was of the plodding efficient type of politician, who form the main-stay of their parties. The Home Secretaryship ultimately rewarded his services, and his single indiscretion in a life of Parliamentary rectitude was to have the effect of giving flappers the vote.

When he was chosen by the Conservatives of Manchester North-West, his experience had been limited to the small affairs that provide work for County Court Judges. He had been concerned with glanders in horses and pirate omnibuses, rather than with the complexities of commerce on which the prosperity of Manchester rests. He lacked nothing in assurance, however, and it was he who pronounced Churchill excommunicate from the Conservative Party for his Free Trade heresies. “Let not Mr. Churchill think that he can return to the Unionists,” Joynson Hicks declared. “There is between him and our party a gulf fixed by himself, which authorizes me to declare in your name, that while there is seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, we will never have him back.”

The prophet lived to see his prophecy confounded—not merely to see the return of the excommunicate to the party, but to sit with him in the same Conservative Cabinet.

Joynson Hicks thought that his opponent offered an easy target as a deserter from his former party, and he had devoted much energy and research to drawing up a pamphlet, recalling what Churchill had said as a Conservative and contrasting it with his later-day statements. In the Tory camp they set great store by this exposure of the Conservative now turned Liberal.

For a less ready speaker than Churchill, it might have proved embarrassing, but he was equal to the occasion. In a single phrase, he destroyed the effect of the carefully prepared attack. The pamphlet had been circulated throughout the constituency and some Conservative hecklers came along to one of the opponent's meetings ; they saw to it that Churchill was given a copy of the leaflet, and they asked him what answer he had got to this chronicle of his inconsistency—"Answer it," they shouted.

Winston replied that when he was a Conservative he had said a number of stupid things. He had left the stupid party because he no longer wished to go on saying stupid things. Thereupon he tore the pamphlet in pieces and flung it from him with a gesture of contempt. It was an effective reply, and he was not troubled further with the famous pamphlet.

Thereafter the hecklers contented themselves with the simple accusation of 'turn-coat.' Whereupon the Liberal supporters retorted with "What about Joe?" Joseph Chamberlain was a more conspicuous example even than Churchill of political desertion.

In addition to the Conservative hecklers, Churchill had to face the interruptions of the Suffragettes, then a rising force in the country. Christabel Pankhurst, the suffragette leader, declared that in the person of Winston Churchill the Liberal Government was to receive the weight of the women's opposition. The method decided on was to wreck his meetings and scarcely a night passed at which the "henpeckers" did not break in upon his eloquence. Joynson Hicks, who was not so embarrassed by their attentions, endeavoured to appeal for fair play on behalf of his opponent, only to be informed that suffragette tactics "will be determined without reference to the works of yourself or of your opponent."

Sylvia Pankhurst was the leader of the campaign and she was delighted when she could sting Winston into an angry retort. On one occasion she was invited to mount the platform to submit her questions. She was forced to remain there to hear the candidate's answers. When she rose to interrupt he told her that she was bringing disgrace upon an honoured name, and he added : "Nothing would induce me to vote for giving women the franchise. I am not going to be henpecked into a question of such importance."

In her history of the women's movement,<sup>1</sup> Sylvia gives a lively account of the result. "I would have gone then, but in a scuffle, during which all the men on the platform stood up to hear what was going on from the audience, I was pushed into a side room. I was left there, the door being locked on the outside, but not before I had opened the window and called to the people in the street to witness the conduct of one enthusiastic Liberal who was jumping

<sup>1</sup> *The Suffragette Movement*, by Sylvia Pankhurst.

about like a madman and threatening to scratch my face. It appeared that I was a prisoner, for the windows were barred, but the people who had gathered outside called to me that a window at the other end of the room had a couple of bars missing. They helped me out and called for a speech. When the night's speaking was done, I gave my story to the newspapers. It appeared with big headlines the next day, producing innumerable jokes at the candidate's expense. There was no more kidnapping."

All the country watched the fight at Manchester North-West. The ex-Prime Minister was contesting the neighbouring constituency, but found that his campaign was quite overshadowed by the Churchill-Joynson Hicks fight. Mr. Balfour found time to speak on behalf of the Conservative nominee at Manchester North-West, but eloquence at that time could not have affected the result.

On the issue of Free Trade and Tariffs Manchester had no doubts where its interests lay. Free Trade was synonymous with prosperity for Manchester, and when the day of the poll came, Free Traders were returned for all six seats, five of which at the Khaki Election had sent Conservatives to Westminster. Balfour was one of the victims on the stricken field. Winston Churchill was returned by the comfortable majority of 1,241 votes. Once again his return helped to swell the tide of victory for his party. The triumph at Manchester was the precursor of a Liberal landslide throughout the country. The Conservatives suffered their worst defeat since the days of the Reform Bill.

Of Winston's part in the Liberal victory that shrewd political observer, Lord Mottistone, wrote in his reminiscences : "Winston Churchill at Manchester conducted a really wonderful Free Trade campaign. Of course Manchester was the home of Free Trade, but making all the allowances for the fact it was nevertheless true that Churchill's achievement at this election in winning votes for Free Trade not only in Manchester but throughout the country was one of the most remarkable electoral performances of our time."

And Winston, mark you, was a young man of 31, fighting his third election. He returned to Westminster, to the dignity and responsibilities of the Front Bench. He was a junior Member of a Ministry which contained as brilliant men as have been included in any administration. At the Exchequer, as right-hand man to Campbell-Bannerman, was Herbert Asquith. Sir Edward Grey, who has his place amongst the great Foreign Secretaries, was at the Foreign Office. At the Board of Trade was Lloyd George, beginning his rise to the highest place. John Morley, philosopher in chief of the Liberals, was at the India Office, and at the War Office was Haldane, one of the subtlest intellects of his day.

In intellectual attainments, these men overshadowed the Prime Minister, but Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had a popularity

with the Liberal Party that resulted from his personality rather than from his mental prowess. When he became Prime Minister, Grey, Asquith and Haldane thought so little of him that they tried to shunt him into the House of Lords, so that the conduct of affairs in the Commons might rest more fully in their hands. This cabal, the famous "Relugas compact," failed, Lady Campbell-Bannerman making up on this occasion for any lack of decisiveness on her husband's part.

It was a complete education for a young man starting on his ministerial career to be associated with such redoubtable Parliamentarians. It is also an indication of Churchill's native ability that though he had not had the benefit of their longer experience in affairs, he could take his place amongst them without suffering by the comparison.

He was particularly attracted by the personality of John Morley. The association of this young man of action and the veteran contemplative philosopher, can only be explained by the principle of the attraction of opposites. The younger man learnt much from 'Honest John,' whose influence could be seen twenty years later, when Churchill was leading the opposition to the great India Reform Bill.

As Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Churchill was not holding ministerial rank usually associated with any great prominence in the political scene. But prominence, somehow, has consistently been associated with his name and his turn as junior minister was no exception.

The late Conservative administration had conducted the war in South Africa to a successful conclusion. The new Liberal Government had to place South Africa's future upon a permanent basis. The Minister principally concerned, the Colonial Secretary, was the Earl of Elgin, newly returned from India, where he had filled the office of Viceroy with distinction. His place being in the Upper House, his understudy in the Commons found himself in charge of the measure, the principal piece of Government legislation of the session and the most controversial.

It was a fine opportunity for winning ministerial spurs and Churchill made full use of it. His knowledge of South Africa and its people gave him an advantage in debate that few members enjoyed. For his old enemies, the Boers, he had always had sympathy and no little admiration, and so he was able to put his heart as well as his brains into his speeches for the Bill.

Campbell-Bannerman, during the war, had denounced the 'methods of barbarism' with which the Boers were treated, and the South African Constitution Bill was the measure of a liberal and enlightened policy. It carried out the pledge in the Treaty of Peace that "as soon as circumstances permit representative institutions leading to self-government will be introduced."

The Conservatives, who considered that they had a special interest in South African affairs, seeing that it was their war and they had won it, objected that the time had not arrived for the conferment of self-government. Lord Milner, Lord Lansdowne, and Arthur Balfour expressed their fears over the outcome of the policy in speeches of gloomy foreboding, which might have served Churchill as models for his orations against the conferment of Home Rule to India a quarter of a century later. But at that stage the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, sustained by the convictions of his Liberal fellow-ministers, had no fears about the granting of self-government to another member of the British Commonwealth. Then he could speak of the blessings of self-government and leave to his Conservative opponents the task of denunciation as they viewed with alarm the most reckless development, as they termed it, of a great Colonial policy.

To these Conservative critics he replied, "We do not ask honourable gentlemen opposite to share our responsibility. If by any chance our counsels of reconciliation should come to nothing, if our policy should end in mocking disaster, then the resulting evil would not be confined to South Africa. Our unfortunate experience would be trumpeted forth all over the world wherever despotism wanted a good argument for bayonets, wherever an arbitrary government wished to deny or curtail the liberties of imprisoned nationalities.

"But if, on the other hand, as we hope and profoundly believe, better days are in store for South Africa, if the long lane it has been travelling has reached its turning at last, if the near future should unfold to our eyes a tranquil, prosperous, consolidated Afrikander nation under the protecting ægis of the British Crown, then, I say, the good, as well as the evil, will not be confined to South Africa ; then, I say, the cause of the poor and the weak all over the world will have been sustained, and everywhere small peoples will get more room to breathe, and everywhere great empires will be encouraged by our example to step forward—and it only needs a step—into the sunshine of a more gentle and a more generous age."

Winston and his ministerial chief formed by no means a happy combination. You can imagine that the Earl, who had just ceased to occupy the position of Viceroy of India, the most elevated post which falls to be filled by a subject of the Crown, might well have expected more deference than he was likely to receive from the junior minister. Sir Austen Chamberlain, in his recollections, recounts a story which mirrors their uneasy relationship. Winston, on one occasion, submitted to his Chief a long memorandum on a matter of Colonial administration. He concluded his paper with the observation "These are my views." "But not mine" was the minute added in Lord Elgin's own hand.

Dr. Jameson, leader of the famous raid, who had business at the Colonial Office about this time, asserted that for the most part State papers were not shown to Winston by Elgin, who was "better fitted to govern the 'Wee Frees' than the Colonies." Jameson told Austen Chamberlain that Elgin "relied on Graham to settle affairs which he explains are 'difficult to understand.' Winston understands fast enough, but evidently is not consulted."

Winston, nevertheless, had the satisfaction of contributing to the achievement of a settlement in South Africa. Lord Mottistone once sought to apportion the praise due to those who set our relations with South Africa on a friendly footing. At the top of the list he placed "the courage of Campbell-Bannerman and Churchill in taking the first step by giving Home Rule to the Transvaal."

The policy of conciliation found its justification when in 1914 and again in 1939 the Union of South Africa rallied to the aid of the Crown to play no mean a part in the struggle against a despotism which in Churchill's phrase wished to "deny the liberties of imprisoned nationalities."

It was during the discussions on South Africa that he coined a phrase that still has its use as a euphemism for inaccuracy of statement. There was much concern in those days about the employment in South Africa of Chinese labour in the mines under a system of indentures which gave rise to allegation of Chinese slavery. The Colonial Under-Secretary was called upon to answer a question on the subject of this labour contract and in his reply he made use of the phrase "terminological inexactitude," which is still current as a coin of speech though the occasion of its minting be forgotten. Let the words appear in their full context :

"The contract," said Mr. Churchill, "may not be a desirable contract, but it cannot be in the view of His Majesty's Government classified as 'slavery' on the extreme acceptance of the word without some risk of terminological inexactitude."

So the years of Ministerial apprenticeship passed until Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, stricken with illness, resigned, and was succeeded by Herbert Asquith. The Government was reconstructed and Mr. Churchill, already a Privy Councillor, became a member of the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade.

He was only 34 years of age and could congratulate himself on political advancement, gained by sheer merit and ability, of a rapidity with which few can compare. He had sat in Parliament only seven years and had belonged to the Liberal Party for a little less than four years. He was already recognized as one of the ablest speakers in the country—one of the leading assets possessed by the Liberal Party.

It was from the heights that Mr. Churchill surveyed the world

in the spring of the year 1908. And then Fortune changed her smiling face for a moment.

Under a Parliamentary procedure, which has since been changed, it was necessary that the new President of the Board of Trade should submit himself to the verdict of his constituents. So amidst the first cares of high office he had to engage in the ordeal of a hard-fought election campaign.

Joynson Hicks was again his opponent.

Winston Churchill did not fail to extract what advantage he could from the constitutional necessity that required him to fight an election, just because he had moved up from the second eleven to the first eleven in the Liberal team. Having pointed out that the office to which he had been promoted was not wholly unsuited to the representation of Manchester North-West, he proceeded : "To oppose the election of a Minister once elected as the Member of Government is, to say the least, unusual. To delay and hamper the work of a great department, charged with important legislation of a purely non-party character, betokens a keener zest for factional than for national interest. Yet, anomalous as is the technicality which renders a contest possible, mischievous as is such opposition which makes it necessary, I welcome this opportunity of dealing with the taunts and challenges, so cheaply uttered during the eighteen months by politicians still smarting from their last defeats."

Joynson Hicks, in his address to the electors, used vigorous language to attack the Liberal Ministry. He declared that it was the first opportunity North-West Manchester had had of proclaiming its opinion of a Government, which in the short space of two years had alienated our Colonies, weakened the Navy, increased taxation, flouted religious convictions, and let loose chaos and bloodshed in Ireland—which, all things considered, is a pretty generous measure of liability.

There was a Socialist in the field, Mr. Dan Irving, standing in the name of the extreme left wing of the Labour movement, but neither of the members of the senior parties gave much heed to this interloper. The contest was a lively one, and the ambulance had to be summoned on more than one occasion when partisanship was not limited to the arbitrament of words. Mr. H. G. Wells, though a Socialist himself, was an unexpected supporter of the Liberal candidate.

Despite the unwritten law against the participation of Cabinet Ministers in a by-election, Mr. Lloyd George came to Manchester to speak on behalf of his colleague. The influence of his oratory was heightened for local patriots by the fact that the Member for Carnarvon was Lancastrian by birth, and had in fact first seen the light of day not a mile from the constituency. His participation gave a target for his opponents, and Mr. Balfour, writing from a

sick-bed in Scotland to urge support for Joynson Hicks, remarked : "That a President of the Board of Trade should find his powers insufficient to defend his own seat, and that a Chancellor of the Exchequer, new to his office, with his Budget immediately pending, should be driven to come to his assistance, is a tribute to your own eloquence and to the enthusiasm of the Party which any Cabinet might envy." With this message A. J. sent a characteristic personal note to Joynson Hicks, saying that his remoteness had left him out of touch with the situation and adding, "If there are any alterations which you desire, please wire them to me."

The Suffragettes again made Churchill the particular object of their attentions.

On this occasion Christabel Pankhurst favoured Manchester with her presence to lead the women's fight against the Liberal Minister. By this time the women's cause had gained supporters and Winston declared himself to be less opposed to their enfranchisement. "Trust me, ladies," he said. "I am your friend and will be your friend in the Cabinet. I will do my best as and when occasion offers, because I do think sincerely that women have always had a logical case and that they have now got behind them a great, popular demand amongst women." Nothing, however, short of a pledge on behalf of the Government for the passing of an enfranchisement Bill could satisfy Christabel Pankhurst and the "henpeckers'" offensive was in no way relaxed. Many prominent women Liberals were induced to decline to support the campaign of the Liberal candidate.

The last speech delivered, the electors gave their verdict and Churchill found himself defeated by the narrow margin of 492 votes in a poll of over 10,000. He could derive some satisfaction from the howl of exultation that went up from the Unionist ranks, and the fall of the Government itself could scarcely have inspired such an outburst of delight. Even the staid *Daily Telegraph* was moved into a sudden insobriety of language, declaring :

"Churchill out—language fails us just when it is most needed. We have all been yearning for this to happen, with a yearning beyond utterance. Figures—oh, yes, there are figures, but who cares for figures to-day. Winston Churchill is out, OUT, OUT!"

Why was the victor of 1906, the man who in Lord Mottistone's phrase had then achieved "one of the most remarkable electoral performances of our time" rejected by Manchester ? His record in the House was good, his Liberalism appeared sound enough, he was not a waverer on Free Trade and he had held junior office with distinction. What was the explanation ?

To those who look back on the politics of thirty years ago the

reason is not apparent. His colleague, John (later Viscount) Morley, provides an explanation :

"The belief among competent observers is that the resounding defeat of Winston at Manchester was due to wrath at rather too naked tactics of making deals with this and that and the other groups without too severe a scrutiny in his own political conscience of the terms that they were exacting from him. In other words Winston has no principles. It is believed that he lost 300-400 of these honourably fastidious electors."

To this judgment Morley added another, "I have a great liking for Winston for his vitality, his indefatigable industry and attention to business, his remarkable gift of language and skill in argument and his curious flair for all sorts of political cases as they arise though even he now and then mistakes a pretty bubble for a great wave. All the same as I so often tell him in a paternal way a successful politician in this country *needs* a good deal more computation of other people's opinions without anxiety about his own."

An interesting pendant to this opinion is provided by Morley's contrast—it was made some years later—between Winston Churchill and Lloyd George : "Whereas Winston knows his own mind, Lloyd George is always more concerned to know the minds of other people."

The break in the Churchillian fortunes was only temporary. The very evening of his defeat, he received an invitation from the Scottish Liberals of Dundee, and hurried North. The campaign was in the main a repetition of that at Manchester North-West, but the result was very different. The President of the Board of Trade polled over 7,000 votes, far ahead of the Conservative and Socialist nominees, who only just exceeded that total between them.

Winston Churchill was able to go back to the Front Bench and his work at the Board of Trade. He held that office for two years, two years of hard work, and had the satisfaction of putting upon the Statute Book measures that produced decisive changes in our national life. It was his Bill that established the Labour Exchanges, now a national institution. He also set in operation Boards for the prevention of sweated labour and put through the Bill for the constitution of the Port of London Authority.

In 1908 Winston married Miss Clementine Hozier, daughter of Colonel Hozier and Lady Blanche Hozier, and grand-daughter of the Earl of Airlie. The wedding at St. Margaret's was one of the social events of the year, and Lord Hugh Cecil, confederate of his Hughligan days, acted as his best man. The marriage proved to be one of the happiest, and Winston has shown that it is possible for a successful politician to be also a successful husband and father.

His son Randolph has followed his father in a political career.

Defeated in two stormy elections at Ross and Cromarty and Wavertree he was returned for Preston, and in the war saw service in the Near East.

Of the Churchill daughters one, Sarah, is herself a talented actress ; Diana, after divorcing Sir Abe Bailey's son, became the wife of Mr. Duncan Sandys, M.P. ; the youngest daughter, Mary, served in the A.T.S.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Radical Phase*

WINSTON CHURCHILL was now a Radical of Radicals. With the impetuosity of his fervent nature, his change of party had carried him to the farthest pole of Liberalism.

At Cabinet Councils, his seat was beside that of John Morley, to whose captivating charm he surrendered himself and whose political philosophy had more influence upon him than he might be prepared to concede. It was an association between a man of action and a man of philosophy which could not have been foreseen. Here on the one hand was a young man who had fought in the Boer War : there on the other was a man thirty-five years his senior, who had denounced it as : "A hateful war, and a war insensate and infatuated, a war of uncompensated mischief, of irreparable wrong." Morley was not an easy colleague, but between him and the young President of the Board of Trade there developed a relationship which bordered on the affectionate. Of Winston, he once said, "I looked with paternal benignity."

Winston's other close companion was Lloyd George. The acquaintance begun on the night of the maiden speech had developed into friendship, and when Churchill crossed the floor, Lloyd George was the first to welcome him. They sat together and acted in concert.

Here was another unexpected association for the young man who fought in the Boer War to have formed, for Lloyd George had gone even farther than John Morley in opposition to that war. Lloyd George and Morley were the recognized pacifist leaders of the party. Winston worked closely with them but, though he might pass as a lover of peace, never could he be classified as a pacifist.

This difference proved no obstacle to the Churchill-Lloyd George partnership, which became stronger when the Welshman succeeded Asquith as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The con-

ception of the Liberal Party's strategy that led to the crisis over House of Lords Reform and the two General Elections of the year 1910 was the result of their partnership.

When the Liberals came to power in 1906, after nearly twenty years of political impotence, they were eager to carry through schemes of social welfare, but the legislation they passed through the Commons was invariably destroyed by the Conservative Peers. The House of Lords became an object of Radical hatred. It had, in Lloyd George's phrase, "ceased to be the watch-dog of the Constitution, and had become Mr. Balfour's poodle." The Conservative peers were unmoved, and proceeded in what they conceived to be their duty of saving the country from the effects of the Liberal legislation. The Liberals took up the challenge, determined to curtail the power of the Lords.

The Budget of the year 1909, the People's Budget, as it is known to fame, provided the occasion the Liberals needed to put the Peers in the worst possible position before forcing the issue to a conclusion. Lloyd George framed his Budget proposals so that benefits should be given to the poorer members of society, at the expense of the richer. It was thrown out by the Lords. Asquith immediately went to the country, and the election was fought on the popular slogan of 'the People and the Lords.' The Liberals were returned but with a greatly diminished majority, and Asquith found himself depending for his political existence upon the Irish vote. A Bill to curtail the Lords' power of veto was hurried through the Commons, to be thrown out by the Peers. A second election took place, confirming the result of the first. The veto Bill was again sent up to the Upper House, and it became known that if the Lords were again to reject it, the Sovereign would create new Peers sufficient in number to ensure that it became law. Under this threat, enough Conservative Peers were induced to withdraw their opposition, and the measure went through.

Throughout this crisis, Churchill and Lloyd George acted together in the closest manner. They were the most effective speakers in the party, the shock troops of the Liberal attack. Winston gave the Chancellor of the Exchequer every help possible in getting his Budget through. His attacks on the Peers were only less violent than those of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Dukes in particular were the subject of his attacks. This grandson of a Duke denounced them for defending vulgar, joyless luxury.

The debates were enlivened by frequent personal duels between Churchill and the rising Tory star, F. E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead, and Lord Chancellor. Each sought to surpass the other in the bitterness and acrimony of debate, and there was no limit to the taunts that they would use against each other in public. Yet in private life F. E. and Winston were firmest friends, even

despite F. E's taunt, once made in the Commons, that Winston had "devoted the best years of his life to the preparation of his impromptu speeches." In this F. E. stood in contrast with other Conservatives.

At that time Winston Churchill was the most hated politician in the country. In the House the personal animosity which he had aroused among the Conservatives when he crossed the floor was maintained by his conduct in office. Of all the members of the Liberal Ministry, he was the one most disliked by the opposition. He kept alive the hostility of his former associates by the pungency of his repartees.

Nor did he go out of his way to conciliate the back-benchers among his new associates. He made his way among men at the top but, a man of rare capacity himself, he had not the art of attracting the admiration and support of men of lesser talents. Showing sometimes little consideration for mediocrity, he hurt the feelings of some of the more sensitive members of his party.

His unpopularity did not, however, prevent his advancement. As he gained in reputation, so he rose in the ranks of the Ministry. In 1910 Asquith offered him the Irish Secretaryship, grave of many a political reputation. Winston declined it and took instead the Home Office.

Before dealing with his conduct as Home Secretary, I must here refer to another occasion in which Winston played his father's role of economist, this time as a result of his collaboration with the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

One of the consequences of the Lloyd George projects for social reform and improving the lot of the poor was that economies were necessary on defence expenditure. Winston supported the Chancellor and had as his opponent Reginald McKenna, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who afterwards left Westminster for the City, to preside over the affairs of one of the great banks. In 1909 McKenna sought an increase of £3,000,000 for the naval estimates, which provided for the construction of six dreadnaughts.

Politics takes men up many strange streets. There was never a stranger street to find Winston Churchill in than the one called Naval Economy. A few years later, and he had abandoned once for all the tattered flag that he had raised at the outset of his career, and helped to pour out money on the Navy on a scale that made the expenditure of previous years seem parsimony by comparison.

McKenna, as I say, wanted six dreadnaughts. Winston and Lloyd George were ready only to accord four. There was heated debate in the Cabinet and Asquith had to use all his powers of conciliation to prevent a split.

At one point, the Cabinet had definitely decided not to authorize the building that Fisher (then First Sea Lord) and the Board of Admiralty recommended, and the resignation of McKenna seemed

inevitable. Then the Admiralty received support from an unexpected quarter. Sir Edward Grey, pausing from his concentration on affairs at the Foreign Office, acquainted himself with the Admiralty claims and recommended that they should be reconsidered.

Ultimately a compromise was reached. Winston has termed it a "curious and characteristic solution." The Admiralty wanted six dreadnoughts. The Cabinet agreed to the laying down of eight, though spread over a period of time.

Fisher in several vigorously phrased letters reproached Winston for the part he then played as the advocate of economy. "I never," he wrote, "expected you to turn against the Navy after all you had said in public and private. (*Et tu, Brute*) . . . It's too sad and deplorable. The Apostle is right. The tongue is the very devil. (N.B.—Yours is strong amidships and wags at both ends.)"

Winston might be amused and not ill-pleased over the conclusion of the fight, his first considerable battle in the Cabinet, but the Asquith Government suffered in prestige. There had been no keeping the Cabinet split secret and the unedifying spectacle of the Little Navy men and the Big Navy men wrangling and threatening resignation was as gratifying to the Tories as it was embarrassing to the Liberals. An entry in Sir Austen Chamberlain's recollections indicates how the Tories gloated over the difficulties of the Cabinet :

"And so Lloyd George's Budget was to be approved. The Little Navy men were to be told it was a programme of only four ships and the Big Navy men were to be assured it was really eight. And now as the result of all this manœuvring the whole country wants eight and will not be happy with less. Asquith jumps about like a parched pea in a frying-pan and doesn't know which way to face, the Liberal Party is divided and all sections of it dissatisfied and uneasy."

As Home Secretary one of Winston's major problems was the maintenance of order during the prolonged and bitter miners' strike of 1910. In Wales there was a succession of ugly incidents and he decided to call upon the military to come to the aid of the civil power. It was a decision fraught with unlimited possibilities for evil unless the utmost discretion was observed by the officers in command of the troops. Winston made the very wise decision to press for the appointment of a senior Army officer to take charge and Haldane, at the War Office, concurred.

Choice for this responsible post fell upon General Sir Nevil Macready, then Director of Personal Services at the War Office, who was requested to place himself under the Home Secretary. There were 600 Welsh police, 500 of the Metropolitan force and two squadrons of the Hussars, and Winston gave Macready authority to control both police and military in the event of disorder

occurring. They made a very successful job of a delicate operation and Macready, on terminating three months' stay in the valleys of South Wales, paid tribute to the Home Secretary.

"It was," he wrote,<sup>1</sup> "entirely due to Mr. Churchill's foresight in sending a strong force of Metropolitan police directly he was aware of the state of affairs in the valleys that bloodshed was avoided. . . . I was in daily communication with the Home Office and during the first few days after arriving in the district noticed an inclination to interfere from Whitehall in details which could only be appreciated by the man on the spot. This, however, very soon wore off, and from that time up to the time I left South Wales nothing could exceed the support given me by Mr. Churchill or the entire absence of any interference in measures I judged necessary to cope with the situation."

Miners' strikes, railwaymen's strikes, labour troubles in London, in Manchester—it was a harassing time. Macready was called upon to render continued assistance, to the neglect of his duties as Director of Personal Services. He gives an amusing picture of a sorely tried Winston :

"The night was very hot, and about 11 p.m. Mr. Lloyd George appeared in a white alpaca or silk motor coat, beaming with good humour, and evidently in a hurry to get away. Winston, at the moment, was deadly serious, pacing up and down the room within the circle of serious-looking officials, and holding forth in regard to the measures that were to be taken. Mr. Lloyd George made straight across the room to the fire-place, where John Burns was standing, and began to tell him what was evidently, to judge by their laughter, a really good story.

"I do not think I have ever seen anybody look more angry than Winston did as he stopped in front of the table, and called Lloyd George to order. For a moment I thought he would hurl one of the official red books on the table at the future Prime Minister, who continued to be amused either at his own story or at Winston, and explained that he wanted to get off on his drive to Brighton."

It was in the Session of 1910 that Winston made clear his position on the question of woman's suffrage. The Suffragettes, as I have already said, had made him one of the principal objects of their unwelcome attentions during a succession of elections.

A Bill to give the Parliamentary vote to women who were already entitled to vote in Municipal contests was introduced by David Shackleton from the Labour benches. The discussion that followed was enlivened by a speech from F. E. Smith, one of the wittiest that even F. E. made. Moving an amendment against

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of an Active Life.* Sir Nevil Macready.

the Bill he expressed his belief that true womanhood would be menaced by the intrusion of women into politics. He did not decry the claim of women to intellectual distinction but added, "I venture to say that the sum total of human happiness, knowledge and achievement would have been almost unaffected if Sappho had never sung, if Joan of Arc had never fought, if Siddons had never played and if George Eliot had never written."

Winston had been expected to support the measure and it was in an expectant House that he rose and said : "Sir, I cannot support this Bill." His reasons, however, were diametrically opposed to those of F. E.—he could not support the Bill because it did not go far enough.

Although the second reading of this measure was carried, women had to wait till 1918 to gain the vote. Both Winston and F. E. were members of the Government that enfranchised them.

Shortly after the Suffragette Bill debate, Winston was threatened by a suffragette enthusiast with a horsewhip. He was travelling back to London by train from a Bradford meeting, when a young man, Hugh Franklin by name, forced his way into the compartment brandishing a whip. Happily he was prevented from carrying out his intention of using the whip as he intended.

Early in 1911 Winston was brought into the limelight in the Sidney Street affair when, to the delight of the popular Press, he directed the operations of troops gathered in a street in the East End of London to deal with a couple of gunmen who styled themselves anarchists.

The siege of Sidney Street took place thirty years ago, but its memory still lives in the picture of the top-hatted Home Secretary, with a force of police behind him and a squad of riflemen before, peering round the corner of a gateway which offered very inadequate shelter.

It was about ten o'clock on the morning of January 3rd, and the Home Secretary was in his bath, when there came an urgent knocking at the door. He was informed that a couple of desperadoes responsible for recent murders of the police at Houndsditch had taken refuge in a room at 100 Sidney Street. They had plenty of arms and ammunition and even home-made bombs.

The gunmen had been traced the night before and as they were expected to stick at nothing to avoid capture, the police had taken the precaution of ordering all the other inmates out of the house. The men were then called upon to surrender. They replied with their guns and a detective-inspector was wounded. More shots came from the house and the police returned fire.

As no progress was being made, the police wanted the Home Secretary's sanction to send troops to the scene. Permission was at once given.

Winston was dripping wet and had no more than a towel about him when he went to the telephone to learn of the drama in Sidney Street. Within twenty minutes he was at the Home Office receiving latest information from the front. The despatches were obscure, as despatches customarily are while operations are still in progress. No one could say what number of gunmen had to be dealt with or what measures might be necessary.

Winston conceived it to be his duty to investigate on the spot, though he has been frank enough to admit that "convictions of duty were supported by a strong sense of curiosity."

The siege had started at three o'clock in the morning and firing was still brisk when Winston reached Houndsditch. There were Metropolitan police armed with shotguns hastily procured from the nearest gunsmith and Scots Guardsmen with rifles. From shotgun and rifle a fusillade was poured into 100 Sidney Street. The answering whine of bullets through the air and the splintering of bricks and woodwork showed that the gangsters were still in a condition to reply.

Law-abiding London could not remember a comparable occasion. For some hours the desultory sniping continued. Soldiers and police surrounded the house and a contingent of men were posted in a brewery opposite to fire across the street into the enemy's quarters.

The Home Secretary watched operations from the shelter of a warehouse doorway where he was joined by Lord Knutsford, Chairman of London Hospital. Among the besiegers differences of opinion developed as to the better method of dealing with the gunmen. Some, wanting an immediate decision, were for storming the house, though it might result in casualties. Others, more cautious in their methods, advocated delay.

While this controversy was developing, the Home Secretary became conscious of the embarrassing situation into which his curiosity had led him. It was really no part of his duty to give executive decisions. That was the responsibility of the man in charge on the spot. From his desk in the Home Office it would have been proper for him to have sent an order, but being there himself it was scarcely proper for him to meddle. On the other hand, his position of paramount authority was not to be gainsaid. It was an unfortunate dilemma and the Home Secretary, as he stood, top-hatted in that East End street, with Lord Knutsford beside him, and the bullets spluttering round, found it in his heart to regret that his curiosity had led him into so delicate and difficult a position, from which he could scarcely drive away. Far better had he been less precipitate and had remained in his departmental chair.

At length the controversy was settled and the men of action were to have their way. It was resolved to storm the house from several

points at once. Here the experience of the man of war was of value. He suggested that a few steel or iron plates were needed so that each member of the storming party could carry one before him as a shield against enemy bullets. Search, accordingly, was made in metal works in the neighbourhood.

While this was proceeding a new development occurred. Smoke was seen to come from the besieged house and it was soon evident that the place was on fire. This would put an end to the siege, for the gunmen would either have to bolt from their refuge or perish in the smoke and flames.

The matter was not as simple as that. A fire had been reported and soon men of the brigade were on the scene, ready to discharge their duties. Gunmen? What were gunmen to them? There was a fire : it was their duty to put it out ; and their duty would be done as laid down by regulations which knew nothing of gangsters or gunmen. The police protested that lives would be lost if the firemen went within range of the bullets that were still spluttering every now and then across the street. The fire brigade officer could not allow bullets to divert him from his duty and made ready to get to work.

At this point Winston intervened. On his authority as Home Secretary, he gave orders that 100 Sidney Street was to be allowed to burn ; only if the surrounding property were to be seriously endangered were the brigade to run the risk of intervening. Happily the necessity never arose.

By now the flames had gained a hold on the building. No shot had been fired for some time and it seemed certain that the gangsters were no longer in a condition to use their guns.

A police inspector strode across the street. The Home Secretary followed him. A sergeant of police marched behind with a double-barrelled shot gun.

The inspector kicked open the door. Nothing was to be seen save smoke and flames. No bullet came from within. The siege was over. At last the firemen could be permitted to discharge their duties as laid down in their regulations.

Later in the day two charred bodies were found in the ruins. It was established that one had been shot by a bullet of the attackers. No trace of wound was found on the other, who apparently had succumbed to suffocation. The men were ultimately identified as belonging to the anarchist gang of that notorious and elusive character—Peter the Painter.

There was a debate in the House, and Balfour, as leader of the Opposition, made what capital he could out of Winston's appearance on the field of battle.

"We are concerned to observe," he said, "photographs in the illustrated papers of the Home Secretary in the danger zone. I

understand what the photographer was doing but not the Home Secretary."

It was not to be the last occasion that Winston Churchill was to be criticized for leaving his departmental desk to appear on the field of action.

The siege of Sidney Street was a nine days' wonder and the publicity was of the kind not to benefit the Home Secretary in the eyes of the sober and sedate members of the public. There has always been a tendency to accuse Winston of flamboyance in his methods, and his critics now declared that he had made the operations unnecessarily elaborated by calling out troops and artillery. He retorted that, although he was present, he did not take charge of the siege, nor did he send for the troops. What he did do was to restrain the firemen from risking their lives on the burning building.

## CHAPTER III

### *First Lord*

**I**N the month of August 1911, the German Government despatched the gunboat *Panther* to the harbour in Morocco of Agadir.

It was a typical instance of Teuton aggressiveness. It caused an immediate crisis throughout Europe ; and it sent Winston Churchill to the Admiralty to begin the most important ministerial work of his career.

The Agadir crisis was the prelude to the War of 1914. It brought home, for the first time, to many of those holding responsible positions the gravity of the German menace to world peace.

In those days, the Powers were concerned about spheres of influence in Africa. In the Treaty of Algeciras, France had been given the zone of Morocco and found it necessary to despatch an expedition to Fez. Germany concluded that the French would try to annex their zone of influence and considered that she should be given corresponding compensation.

As a preliminary to staking her claims, she sent the gunboat *Panther* to Agadir. It was no more than a gesture made in the Teutonic fashion. It provided an occasion for a test of international opinion, and a test of military preparedness.

It had the immediate effect of drawing Great Britain and France closer together. In the Cabinet, it made the Radical and Pacifist wing, of which Lloyd George and Morley were principal members,

conscious as they had never previously been of the extent of German aggressiveness. Lloyd George in a speech to the bankers in the City of London delivered himself of a warning to Germany that has won its place in history. "If," he said, "a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace can only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations ; then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure."

This speech came as something of a shock to the leaders of Germany, who had always reckoned that the pacifism of Lloyd George and the Radicals would keep Britain out of any war in which Germany might be engaged.

The crisis and the speech also produced a remarkable change in Churchill's outlook. His receptive mind responded instantly to the shock. Hitherto he had been concerned as Home Secretary with home affairs and his vision had not been extended to any great degree to events across the Channel. In common with other departmental chiefs in the Government he had been so immersed in his duties that he had showed no particular concern in foreign policy and the development of the Entente with the French. This was the special sphere of Asquith as Prime Minister, Grey as Foreign Secretary, of Haldane at the War Office and of McKenna at the Admiralty.

The Agadir crisis immediately sent Churchill to inquire into these things. With characteristic enthusiasm, the subject of international affairs, which he had hitherto neglected, now became his principal preoccupation. That Britain should be in a state of preparedness for the contingency of war became his immediate concern.

As Home Secretary, military preparedness did not come within the scope of his departmental responsibilities. But one thing that at once occupied him was the guarding of our reserves of cordite. By chance, he found that the Home Office was responsible for this task, which was discharged by a few constables. This did not seem sufficient for the Home Secretary, in the light of his sudden awareness of international danger. So there and then he rang up the Admiralty and asked that some marines should be sent to guard the magazines. The Admiral to whom he spoke did not respond to Churchill's alarm ; seemed indeed almost to resent the intrusion of the Home Secretary in the affairs of the Navy. He flatly refused to send marines.

Churchill was not in the mood to be baulked by an Admiral. He straightway telephoned to the War Office and found Haldane more sympathetic. In a few hours troops had been sent to reinforce the constables and our cordite resources were safe.

The Agadir crisis, menacing as it seemed to be for a while, died down, and the peace of Europe was not then disturbed. But such was the alarm it caused that, in August, Haldane persuaded the Prime Minister to summon a special meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, to consider what action Britain should take if France were attacked by Germany. It disclosed vital differences between the Admiralty and the War Office.

Haldane, in five years at the War Office, had carried out a thorough reform of the Army. His purpose had been to create an Expeditionary Force which could give aid to the French. In conjunction with French staff officers, plans were drawn up so that we should ship the whole of our Force to a position on the French left wing as speedily as possible. Arrangements had been worked out in detail.

In contrast with the War Office, the Admiralty had no plans for the placing of a British force at the side of the French. The War Office scheme had been completed in minutest detail, but in a departmental water-tight compartment. The War Office had arranged for trains on land—it was even fixed where the troops were to stop for coffee—but not for vessels for the crossing. The Admiralty had not been consulted and the crisis showed that they were not in a position to supply transports as and when the Army should need them.

It is easy enough to understand the lack of Admiralty interest. Their strategy had not been worked out in conjunction with the French. It was, in fact, antagonistic to the idea of sending our small Army to Northern France. It was Fisher's dictum that our Army was "too little for a big war." Fisher was no longer First Sea Lord, but his successor, Sir Arthur Wilson, was a Fisher man; indeed, Fisher had ante-dated his own retirement from office by a few months to ensure that Wilson should succeed him.

At the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Sir Arthur opposed the sending of an Expeditionary Force to the Continent at all. He submitted that the Army should be used in conjunction with the Navy to make raids on the German coast.

Haldane was dismayed to find that if an emergency were to arise, his well-thought-out plans would be frustrated for lack of naval co-operation. He wrote to the Prime Minister, to protest against the Admiralty policy and Admiralty methods, and to urge that there should be established at the Admiralty a scientifically trained war staff, similar to that which had been created at the War Office. He backed up his demands with the threat of resignation. "I have, after mature consideration," he wrote, "come to the conclusion that this, in the existing state of Europe, is the gravest problem which confronts the Government to-day; and that unless it is tackled resolutely, I cannot remain in office. Five years' experience of the

War Office has taught me how to handle the Generals and how to get the best out of them ; and I believe that the experience makes me the best person to go to the Admiralty and carry through as thorough a reorganization there as I have carried out at the War Office. In any event, I am determined that things at the Admiralty shall not remain any longer as they are."

Asquith was persuaded of the need for a change at the Admiralty, where Reginald McKenna was in charge. The Prime Minister was for a time undecided whether to send Haldane to the Admiralty, or whether Churchill should succeed as First Lord.

Haldane was one of Asquith's closest associates. He was an outstanding intellectual force in the Liberal Government. His mind was remarkable alike for its breadth of vision and its subtlety. He had reformed the Army ; he was concerned with reforms in our educational system, and in the intricate laws which govern the holding and transfer of property. In spite of the heavy weight of his duties, he was always ready to preside over this or that investigation into problems of social welfare. On the other hand Winston Churchill, then only 37, was a comparatively new recruit to the Liberal Party of which Haldane had been for many years an ornament. He lacked Haldane's long and wide experience of affairs, but he had two qualities which recommended him—his vigour as a speaker only surpassed in the party by Lloyd George, and his energy and ability to get things done.

Asquith had gone on holiday to Scotland. He invited both Churchill and Haldane to meet him there to discuss what should be decided—whether to send Haldane to the Admiralty and let Churchill succeed at the War Office, or to make one change alone and appoint Churchill First Lord. Of this meeting, Haldane wrote his close friend, Edward Grey :

"Asquith asked me to see him first alone, and then with Winston. I did so without mincing matters. Winston was very good, reasoned that if he went there [the Admiralty] he would work closely with me at the War Office, in the spirit of his father, who had always said that there ought to be a common administration. I felt, however, that, full of energy as he is, he does not know his problem or the vast field of thought that has to be covered. Moreover, though I did not say this to him, I feel that it was only a year since he had been doing his best to cut down mechanized armies, and that the Admiralty would receive the news of his advent with dismay ; for they would think, wrongly or rightly, that as soon as the financial pinch begins to come eighteen months from now, he would want to cut down. He is too apt to act first and think afterwards, though of his energy and courage one cannot speak too highly."

Thereafter Asquith went to Balmoral to talk the matter over with the King. He then concluded that to send Haldane from the War

Office would look too much like a snub for the Admiralty. In announcing his decision to Haldane he wrote : "The idea of your removal to the Admiralty was naturally very attractive to me, as you will readily believe. The main and, in the longer run, the deciding factor with me in a different sense, has been the absolute necessity for keeping the First Lord in the Commons. It is with great reluctance that I have been driven to this conclusion, but I know that I can trust you to give not only co-operation but much needful inspiration and guidance to Churchill."

It was in this manner that Winston Churchill was installed at the Admiralty, and given the specific commission to put the Fleet into "a state of instant and constant readiness for war in case we are attacked by Germany." For this task, he felt that life had been preparing him.

Before passing on it should be remarked that Haldane came to renounce the criticism of Churchill he had made in advance, and was writing a few weeks later to his mother to say :

"Winston and Ll. G. dined with me last night and we had a very useful talk. This is now a very harmonious Cabinet. It is odd to think that three years ago I had to fight these two for every penny for my Army Reforms. Winston is full of enthusiasm about the Admiralty, and just as keen as I am on the war staff. It is delightful to work with him. Ll. G. too has quite changed his attitude, and is now very friendly to your bear, whom he used to call the 'Minister for Civil Slaughter.' "

Winston's first principal task, as is apparent from the record of events that led to his appointment, was the creation of a Naval Staff. This innovation was the cause of much naval heartburning and he came in for unjustifiable criticism because of it. The critics' point of view was expressed by Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, who, in his life of Lord Fisher, published twenty years later, wrote :

"When Mr. Churchill came to the Admiralty knowing nothing at all about the Navy and not appreciating that the Navy both in peace and war is fundamentally a different machine from the Army, he was determined to introduce a War Staff at the Admiralty, modelled on the one at the War Office . . .

"Mr. McKenna, the finest First Lord of the Admiralty we have seen in modern times, was superseded by Mr. Winston Churchill, who at once began to bring in a scheme for a Naval War Staff. His ideas were not agreed to by Lord Fisher or by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Wilson. These two Admirals had far more general experience of the Navy than any other officers, and both were strongly against the creation of Chief of Staff other than First Sea Lord. This arbitrary act of over-riding the experience and advice

of the two greatest Admirals of modern times brought retribution to Mr. Churchill later on in the early days of the war."

There the picture is clear cut. You are presented with the inexperienced, masterful Churchill, devising the scheme of a Naval War Staff out of the maliciousness of his own fertile brain, resolved to carry it out in the face of the advice of the highest technical experts, the greatest Admirals of modern times.

Of the wisdom or unwisdom of the establishment of a Naval War Staff much may be written. It is, however, irrelevant to the major point—that the decision to create such an authority was not made by Winston Churchill after being appointed First Lord. It was a decision which originated in the first place with Haldane, and for which Asquith, as Prime Minister, was primarily responsible. Asquith decided that McKenna should be replaced at the Admiralty so that the reorganization might be carried out, and he appointed Winston as First Lord with this specific object in view.

This criticism of Winston falls plainly to the ground. Nor can it be agreed that he "at once began to bring in" his scheme. In his record of events in his "*World Crisis*" he describes how, knowing that Sir Arthur Wilson was opposed to it, he delayed setting up the Naval Staff until Sir Arthur's period of office had expired.

One of his earliest decisions as First Lord was to enlist the services of Fisher as his unofficial adviser. The veteran Admiral, creator of the modern battleship and the modern Navy, was then living in honoured retirement as Baron Fisher of Kilverstone. The partnership between the very young First Lord and the veteran sea-dog bore good fruit, and was to have a fateful influence on the course of their two lives.

Fisher, as First Sea Lord, from 1904 to 1910, had revolutionized the Navy. His reforming zeal and methods of turbulence had involved him in a feud with Lord Charles Beresford and reactionaries of the Naval Service.

The Navy was in danger of being split into Fisher's men and Beresford's men. The operations in this battle of the Admirals spread beyond the Service. The politicians discussed it in the Parliamentary lobbies and the hostesses of Mayfair argued about it over their teacups.

Finally an inquiry was ordered by the Cabinet. Fisher did not consider that the findings were sufficiently in his favour, though Beresford was declared to have been guilty of indiscipline towards the Admiralty. When he went into retirement in 1910 Fisher left the country disgusted with the ways of politics and politicians. For some time he remained aloof doing, as he said, "a little of Achilles sulking in the tent," but the fit did not last for long. Winston fetched him out of his tent, "to carry on, as unofficial adviser,

his work of securing the fighting efficiency of the Fleet and its instant readiness for war."

When Winston first made advances to him, Fisher hung back out of loyalty to his old chief, McKenna. It is pleasant to be able to write that McKenna himself urged Fisher to place the invaluable aid of his wisdom and experience at Winston's disposal for the good of the Navy and the country.

One result of this collaboration was the advancement of Sir John Jellicoe, so that it was this great naval strategist who was in command of the Fleet when war came. This was a matter on which Fisher placed the greatest store. He regarded Jellicoe as a seaman with "all the attributes of Nelson." Winston was converted to his view and arranged the succession accordingly. In a letter dated November, 1911, Fisher gloated over the success he had achieved. He wrote :

"My two private visits to Winston were fruitful. I'll tell you the whole secrets of the changes—to get Jellicoe Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet prior to October 1914, which is the date of the battle of Armageddon. He will succeed Callaghan automatically in two years from December 19, 1911, so will have all well in hand by the before-mentioned date ! *Nunc Dimitis*. Everything revolved round Jellicoe."

October, 1914, was indeed a shrewd forecast.

Within the Admiralty the First Lord selected as his Private Secretary the youngest Flag Officer in the Fleet—David Beatty, who was destined to take over the command of the Battle Cruiser Squadron and to gain renown at Jutland and finally to succeed Jellicoe. Churchill had first met Beatty after the charge of the Lancers at Omdurman and later events confirmed his first impressions of Beatty's character and abilities.

The harmonious collaboration between Winston and Fisher was interrupted when in 1912 the First Lord appointed to important commands Admirals who did not enjoy Fisher's respect. The old sea-dog sent in an indignant protest :

"I fear," he wrote, "this must be my last communication with you on any matter at all. I am sorry for it but I consider you have betrayed the Navy in these three appointments, and what the pressure could have been to induce you to betray your trust is beyond my comprehension."

Fisher then left for Naples and *dolce far niente*.

Winston did not leave Achilles to sulk for long on this occasion although the temperamental sea-dog required careful wooing before he could be brought back from his Mediterranean refuge. Winston addressed numerous appeals to him and requests for advice. The appeals were backed by letters from Lord Esher, Sir John Jellicoe

and Captain (now Lord) Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence. It was balm to the heart of the exile.

Finally the First Lord and the Prime Minister himself, travelling in the Admiralty Yacht, came to Naples to beg him to return. They found him "reluctant to give up his freedom" but that Sunday he heard an eloquent sermon in the course of which the preacher, appearing to fix his eyes on the retired Admiral, declared, "No man possessing all his powers and full of vitality has any right to say 'I am now going to rest as I have had a hard life,' for he owes a duty to his country and fellow men."

Fisher's biographer makes the comment on this remarkably inspired approposism—"Had the circumstances been reversed and Lord Fisher and Mr. Churchill changed places, we should have had little doubt that the clergyman had been primed by Lord Fisher to persuade a member of his congregation. It is exactly the class of foresight, preconception and action which was characteristic of Lord Fisher."

Personally I feel there is ground for suspecting that Winston Churchill's 'foresight, preconception and action' on this occasion were in actuality equal to those attributed to Lord Fisher. Whatever the inspiration of the preacher's words, Fisher returned to England.

One decision of far-reaching consequences followed the healing of the breach—the ensuring for the Navy of the vast resources of the oil fields in Persia.

Like all innovations in the Services, the use of oil as propelling power for warships gave rise to acute controversy. Its employment was opposed by stick-to-the-old-methods men just as the use of steam in a former age was decried by the seamen who had been trained to sail.

Fisher, a pioneer in the use of oil, had neglected no occasion to advocate the development of sources of supply independent of foreign control. On his advent to the Admiralty Winston was equally quick to appreciate the importance of oil and the necessity for ensuring supplies. To secure an authoritative opinion as a basis for action, he decided on the appointment of a powerful Royal Commission, and over this body Lord Fisher, on his return from Naples, presided. The proceedings were conducted in strict secrecy : the findings of the Commission were not made public. But the results were to be seen in the conclusion of a long-term contract between the British Government and the Persian Oil Company.

In his life of Fisher, Sir Reginald Bacon included a memorandum on the oil position from the authoritative pen of Lord Greenway, who was president of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which indicates the debt owed to Churchill. Having set out the part Fisher took in

the development of oil for the Navy ('Oil Maniac,' is the title given to him) Lord Greenway dealt with the setting up of the Royal Commission, and proceeded :

"One outcome was that the potentialities of the Persian oilfields as great producers of oil were revealed, and eventually, in July, 1914, after an examination of the fields by an expert Committee (under the leadership of Admiral Slade), which was sent out by Mr. Churchill, the British Government entered into a long contract with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, by which it secured for the Navy a large proportion of its peace-time requirements of oil fuel and the whole call on its production at times of war. At the same time an agreement was concluded whereby the Government, by investing £2,000,000 to be expended on further developments (the programme for which has since been far exceeded), secured a controlling interest in the Company.

"Mr. Churchill, when giving, in the first volume of his book 'The World Crisis,' an estimate of the financial result of this investment, showed that the then return was £40,000,000. To-day (1928) at the much enhanced value of the shares held by the Government, a further £20,000,000 can be added to these figures—a colossal gain on an investment which was embarked upon, in the face of great opposition, merely as a measure of national defence ! The only measure of defence (with the exception of the purchase of the Suez Canal shares) ever entered upon by the British Government which, instead of costing taxpayers a large sum of money, has given them an enormous profit !

"The credit of carrying through these extraordinarily favourable contracts is, of course, entirely due to Mr. Churchill, and, more particularly, to the able and forceful manner in which he dealt with the consequent Money Bill in the House of Commons in the teeth of the strongest possible opposition. From the point of view of the Navy it was a great feat of statesmanship for which the country should always be grateful."

There was a period of three months short of three years between the October day in 1911 when Winston first entered the Admiralty as First Lord and the fateful Tuesday in August, 1914, when Britain and Germany were at war. They were for him years of the most strenuous endeavour. He quickly put his political past aside once more and became the champion of naval expansion. He developed himself and inculcated in his staff around him a sense of the ever-growing menace inspired by the activities of the power on the other side of the North Sea. He was determined to raise the British Navy to the greatest possible strength in the shortest possible time.

No First Lord has ever succeeded in identifying himself more

closely with the Service. Such time as he was not at Admiralty headquarters in Whitehall he passed afloat with men of the Navy—in warship, submarine or seaplane, or in the Admiralty yacht, *Enchantress*.

And all the while, across the North Sea, the Germans were striving to come to terms of equality in naval strength. In a speech on Clydeside in 1912, Winston warned them that Britain would not yield the mastery of the seas. "The purposes of British naval power are essentially defensive," he said. "We have no thoughts, and we have never had any thoughts, of aggression ; we attribute no such thoughts to other great Powers. There is, however, this difference, between the British naval power and the naval power of the great and friendly empire—I trust it may long remain a great and friendly empire—of Germany. The British Navy is to us a necessity, and from some points of view the German Navy is to them more in the nature of a luxury. Our naval power involves British existence. It is existence to us ; it is expansion to them."

"The nature of a luxury"—the phrase was quickly taken up in Germany. *Luxusflotte*—why should their Navy be thus described? The big navy men of Germany were furious and ranted extravagantly at the First Lord's temerity.

There was by now no disguising the naval race. The First Lord in the following year made the offer of a naval holiday but no response was made from across the North Sea. Germany was not interested in introducing, as he suggested, a blank page into the book of misunderstanding. The Germany of 1913 and the Germany of 1939 displayed the same spirit and the same purpose. There was no avoiding the fatal end.

During the last months before Germany of the Kaiser opened the gates of destruction on Europe, Ireland came to occupy the principal place of political controversy. Asquith and his Government were bent upon granting Home Rule and the Unionist Irreconcilables, led by Carson and his lieutenant, "Galloper Smith" (as Winston's friend F. E. was now called), were bent upon civil war rather than submit.

Winston supported the Government, though his father, as Bonar Law reminded him, had coined the slogan, "Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." This view, despite its parental origin, Winston repudiated as one from which "every street bully with a brickbat and every crazy fanatic fumbling with a pistol may draw inspiration."

Ireland, indeed, through a succession of political crises, had taken up much of the time that the First Lord was not called upon to devote to the affairs of the Navy. Leading members of a Government are never allowed to devote themselves exclusively to the work of their departments. Each member has to accept individual

responsibility for their collective decisions, and must give his support to them. It was on Churchill and Lloyd George that Asquith had chiefly to rely for the presentation of the Government's case to the House and to the country.

Winston found by experience the truth of Mr. Balfour's complaint that "Democracy threatens to kill its servants by the work it requires of them—but what is play to it, is death to us." He was called upon to move the second reading of the 1912 Home Rule Bill, a duty he performed, for once, without any great credit to himself. Scarcely a week passed in the next two years but he had to support by public speech the latest Government proposal on Ireland or answer the latest criticism of the Opposition. His opponents found his speeches 'fiery,' but then Winston "does not exactly walk about with an oil-can."

During the height of one of the Parliamentary storms over Ireland, Winston was the recipient of a more than usually ponderous argument against Home Rule. The debate, even for an Irish debate, had been extremely stormy. At one stage Sir William Bull was ordered out of the Chamber. At another, the Speaker suspended the sitting for an hour for tempers to cool. When the House resumed the Attorney-General, Sir Rufus Isaacs (later Lord Reading), was howled down. It was obviously useless to continue and the Speaker adjourned the House to the morrow.

As Winston and his friend, Col. Seely (now Lord Mottistone), Secretary for War, who also had broken with the Conservatives on the Tariff issue, left the Front Bench, Conservative M.P.s opposite raised a chorus of "Rats." Winston waved his acknowledgment of the greeting. His smile did nothing to placate the demonstrators. Ronald McNeill, in the heat of the moment, seized a book from the table and flung it at the First Lord. By an ironic coincidence it was a manual of rules and advice for the observance of good order in parliamentary proceedings. It was well aimed and caught Winston a glancing blow on the face.

For a moment it looked as if the blow would be returned. Supporters came hurrying to the side of the contestants when Will Crooks, with his ready Cockney wit, shouted cheerily, "Should auld acquaintance be forgot?" The interjection was so quaint that it raised a laugh and the crisis was passed.

The aggressor hurried after the aggrieved to express his regrets but was unable to find the First Lord. When the House met the following day he made a handsome apology. It was handsomely accepted. Said Winston, "I can assure the hon. member that I have not, nor have I had at any time, any personal feeling in the matter, and if I had any personal feelings the observations he has thought proper to address to the House would have effectually removed them."

During another debate Winston was involved in a passage at arms with Bonar Law. There had been threats by Ulstermen to appeal abroad for protection, following the precedent of Protestants of another generation who sought the aid of William of Orange. The name of the Emperor of Germany had been mentioned as one whom Ulster might approach rather than submit to being governed by the Irish in Dublin.

Bonar Law, to indicate the strength of feeling in Ulster, remarked: "These people in North East Ireland, from old prejudices perhaps more than from anything else, from the whole of their past history, would prefer, I believe, to accept the government of a foreign country rather than submit to be governed by honourable gentlemen below the gangway [the Irish Nationalists]."

Replying for the Government, Winston seized upon this passage as an indiscretion to be exploited. "I refer," he said, "to the statement which he quoted with approval that the Loyalists of Ulster would rather be annexed to a foreign country . . . ."

"Than under moonlighters," interjected Sir Edward Carson.

The First Lord sought to continue but there was much interruption. When he could make himself heard he went on, "Ulster would rather be annexed to a foreign country than continue in her allegiance to the Crown . . . ."

"Withdraw" and "Scandalous" shouted Conservative M.P.s.

Winston waited again till the uproar was spent and added, "This then is the latest Tory threat—Ulster will secede to Germany."

The storm broke out afresh at this. "Germany? Who said Germany?" shouted Conservatives above the general clamour.

Lord Winterton appealed to the Speaker. Was not the reference the First Lord had made to Germany deliberately provocative and calculated to cause ill-feeling between this country and Berlin?

Winston retorted that he had felt bound to draw the attention of the House to the statement as indicating what the Leader of the Opposition considered to be proper conduct for Ulster loyalists.

Bonar Law rose to explain. He did not, as the House expected, disavow the reference to Germany. Churchill had accused him of quoting the statement as to the Ulster people's intentions "with approval." This was inaccurate. He had stated what he believed to be a fact, but not with either approval or disapproval.

During these months Winston was playing the double role of fiery partisan and pacificator—firebrand in public, pacifier behind the scenes. He had come to the conclusion that a Coalition Government was the best means of reducing the political tension and finding the way to solve the acute problems which the warfare

of parties made more difficult. Late in 1913 Sir Austen Chamberlain wrote :

"This autumn I was engaged with others in an attempt to find a compromise on the Irish question which both parties could accept. Mr. Churchill was the prime mover in this overture and again suggested a coalition to make a national settlement of some of the great problems of the day."

There was a meeting between Austen and Winston aboard the Admiralty yacht *Enchantress* in November, 1913. A frank if discursive discussion took place. Austen thought that Winston 'orated' overmuch, but he was genuinely impressed by the sincerity of his desire for a settlement.

This good impression was somewhat dissipated by a speech that Asquith made the following day. Austen was too much engaged in the heat of the struggle to see things as clearly as the Conservative Leader in the Lords, the venerable Lord Lansdowne, to whom Austen communicated both his account of the meeting in the *Enchantress* and his criticisms of Asquith. Lansdowne sagely replied :

"Your comments on Asquith's speech were perfectly justified but I am inclined to think that Asquith probably believed himself to be doing exactly what Winston apparently thinks the leaders of both parties ought to do, viz.: to make speeches full of party claptrap and No Surrender with a few sentences on the end for wise and discerning people to see and ponder."

Claptrap and sayings for the wise in a judicious amalgam—it is the recipe for the greater number of political speeches of the partisan type.

The conversations Winston and Austen had begun led to exchanges between Asquith and Bonar Law, but they came to naught. The Liberal Government proceeded with their plans to enforce Home Rule for Ireland; Carson, Galloper Smith and the Tory extremists completed their arrangements to safeguard Ulster if necessary by fighting. Tension became more acute than ever.

'Carson's Army' now had some 100,000 members, with large supplies of rifles and machine-guns pouring into the country. In March 1914 came the affair at Curragh Camp, in southern Ireland, where the officers were asked whether they would undertake active service in Ulster or resign from the Army. All resigned. Winston had no official concern in the incident, but his friend, Colonel Seely, who ordered the inquiry to be made of the officers, was compelled to resign from the War Ministry.

A military coup by Ulster Volunteers followed a month after the Curragh affair. The ports of Larne and Donaghadee on the

north-east coast were seized, and large supplies of munitions were landed and despatched by car all over the north-east of Ireland.

Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, ordered a cruiser squadron to the Scottish coast opposite Ulster in readiness to land a force of Royal Marines in the event of serious disorders. This drew down on him a storm of denunciation in the House of Commons. He replied with characteristic vigour by describing the Opposition motion as "a vote of censure by the criminal classes upon the police." He also suggested fresh discussions with Carson.

The Buckingham Palace Conference was the result, a conference that ended in failure just eleven days before Great Britain declared war on Germany. In Winston's own phrase, "The discussion had reached its conclusive end and the Cabinet was about to separate when the quiet grave tones of Sir Edward Grey's voice were heard reading a document which had just been brought to him from the Foreign Office." It was the Austrian note to Servia. "The parishes of Tyrone and Fermanagh faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland, and a strange light began immediately, but by imperceptible gradations, to fall and grow upon the map of Europe."

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Fleet was Ready*

A GADIR was the rehearsal ; Serajevo raised the curtain on war. It was on June 28th, 1914, that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, with his wife, was assassinated at the Bosnian capital of Serajevo by Slav Nationalists who thereby struck the fatal spark to send Europe up in explosion. Five weeks intervened before Britain entered the war.

It was not until those fateful weeks had nearly run their course that the British Cabinet as a whole regarded the European situation as their chief problem. Ireland was their principal preoccupation and as late as July 25th, and even July 28th, Ireland was reviewed at Cabinet Councils before the menacing state of affairs on the Continent was considered.

At the Admiralty, however, there was of necessity a different evaluation of the importance of the pressing questions of the hour.

As the threat of war spread, and Russia, Germany and France became involved in the original dispute between Austria and Serbia, Winston Churchill at the Admiralty, like Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office, became more and more concerned with the

march of events. Grey laboured to preserve the peace. Churchill speeded up precautions lest the peace efforts should fail. He was determined that the diplomatic situation should not get ahead of naval preparations.

In those days Winston had two duties to perform. He had to marshal the Fleets and he had also to lead the section of the Cabinet which was in favour of a strong policy and fulfilling our obligations to France if the occasion should arise. The first of these two responsibilities was the lighter.

The First Lord, in his wisdom, had decided to hold no naval manœuvres in the summer of the year 1914. Instead he had arranged for a test mobilization of the Navy in which the men and ships of the 2nd and 3rd Reserve Fleets were put on a war footing. As the climax to this test, a Naval Review was held, bringing together the most formidable assembly of warships that the world had witnessed up to that time.

It so chanced that the massing of the ships at Spithead on July 17th and 18th coincided with the worsening of the situation in Europe. The Fleets dispersed to return to port, but Churchill and the First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg (afterwards Lord Milford Haven), decided, in view of the gravity of the hour, not to allow the dispersal to be completed. On the following Monday morning, the Press contained the announcement :

Orders have been given to the First Fleet, which is concentrated at Portland, not to disperse for naval leave for the present. All vessels of the Second Fleet are remaining at their home ports in proximity to their balance crews.

Steps such as these, grave as was the responsibility involved, were carrying out matters of mere routine in accordance with plans long formulated. On the political front, however, there was no such simplicity.

Opinion among Ministers was hopelessly divided. The Cabinet in its majority was pacific.

The peace-at-any-price men were for a declaration of neutrality without imposing any conditions on Germany. Lord Morley was the chief of this group, and associated with him were John Burns, Sir John Simon, then Attorney-General (now Viscount Simon and later Lord Chancellor), Earl Beauchamp and Mr. Hobhouse. Allied with these, but a shade less pacific in their opinions, were Lloyd George and Lord Harcourt.

A centre body of opinion was not committed to any definite decision. The Marquis of Crewe, Mr. Reginald McKenna and Sir Herbert (now Viscount) Samuel were the principals of this centre front. Grey and Churchill were solid for intervention.

Asquith himself was of the same opinion, but as Prime Minister he did not allow himself the same freedom to express his opinions. His was the task of striving to reconcile the irreconcilables and avert the threatened disintegration of the Ministry.

We have it on his authority that Winston, during that final week, was "very bellicose, demanding instant mobilization." His mind was brimming with ideas and he was in what Asquith almost censoriously described as 'tearing spirits' at the prospect of war.

So that fateful week, the last week of peace, passed. Debates in the Cabinet were followed by conferences outside. Talks between perplexed Ministers lasted till midnight and beyond.

On the Tuesday, Winston, on his own initiative, and without Cabinet sanction, despatched the Fleet to its war station. During the hours of darkness, the mighty warships and their attendant flotillas steamed from Portland up Channel, through the Straits of Dover out into the spaces of the North Sea, on the way to the appointed base at Scapa Flow.

There were still the complete reserves to be mobilized. On the Saturday, the first day of August, Winston sent out a warning at the Admiralty to have everything in readiness for this step.

"It seems certain," he wrote, "that the order to mobilize will be issued after the Cabinet this morning."

The Cabinet, however, would not give their assent for this to be done.

On the Sunday the Foreign Office boxes conveyed to Ministers the information that Germany had declared war on Russia. Churchill, on receipt of this information, went immediately to Number 10. To the Prime Minister, who was conferring with Grey, Haldane and Crewe, he announced his intention to complete mobilization forthwith, notwithstanding the Cabinet decision to the contrary.

"I will take full personal responsibility," he declared, "to the Cabinet to-morrow morning."

Asquith did not demur. And so, with no legal authority to back him, and without the Royal Proclamation that should have been signed, Winston sent out the orders to mobilize.

Twenty-four hours later the Cabinet gave its formal assent to these wholly justified but strictly unconstitutional actions. By then there was no resisting the pressure of events. Only a few hours remained before Britain too was at war.

In those last hours the First Lord was busily engaged in sending out final directions to the commands of the navy, warning them to be prepared to meet surprise attacks, to co-operate with the French, to respect the neutrality of Italy. There was the German

cruiser *Goeben* in the Mediterranean. Orders were given that she was to be shadowed by two battle cruisers, but she got away.

Winston, during the nerve-racking final hours, was a monument of calm, clear-headed steadiness. His dispositions had been made, his preparations were complete, he could await the event with confidence.

He was in his place in the House on the Monday afternoon when Sir Edward Grey made his historic declaration to the world that Great Britain would stand loyally shoulder to shoulder with the French against German aggression. As Grey made his speech, we are told, tears were seen to trickle down Churchill's cheek. Why those tears? Tears of sadness at the thought of the tragedy to come? Or tears of relief that the peace-at-any-price men had been foiled? We do not know.

Carson, who had been ranged against Winston over Ireland, saw those tears. The champion of Ulster, who knew that the First Lord had never faltered over Britain's duty in the greater crisis, went up to him. As they passed behind the Speaker's chair, they shook hands in silence.

The British ultimatum to Germany expired at midnight in Berlin—11 o'clock in London.

The ultimatum was a communication to which no reply was expected. As the sands ran out Asquith sat waiting in the Cabinet Room at Number 10. Sir Edward Grey was there to certify the silence of Berlin.

The hour struck. Britain was at war.

In another room at Whitehall, the First Lord was waiting. The notes of Big Ben came reverberating through the open windows. It was the signal for the despatch to British ships and naval establishments throughout the world of the terse instruction: "Commence hostilities against Germany."

On land the enemy had had the advantage of the initiative. They chose the place and hour for the first tremendous stroke. At sea, thanks to Winston Churchill, the advantage was with the British Navy. Von Tirpitz was unable by an immediate engagement to take the Fleet at a disadvantage. "Great Britain," says the German official naval historian, "had received extensive military advantage by her fast mobilization and her subsequent measures which Germany could not counter or overtake."

*PHASE THE THIRD*

*Britain at War*

*I have done the State some service and they know it;  
No more of that. I pray you in your letters  
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate  
Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate  
Nor set down aught in malice.*

SHAKESPEARE, "Othello."

## CHAPTER I

### *Dunkirk and Antwerp*

LOOKING back on the course of his long career of service to the country, Winston Churchill can look back with justifiable pride on his work in ensuring that the Navy was fully prepared in 1914.

The Allies then were faced with a German Navy of considerable force. It was not as great as ours, but it had a number of mighty ships, making it much more formidable than the Navy of pocket battleships with which Hitler entered upon the war in 1939.

In 1914, had the Germans been able to catch the Grand Fleet at a disadvantage, they might have inflicted severe losses upon it. Its units were in a position to do untold harm to our merchant shipping.

Yet, such was the pinnacle of preparation to which the Navy had been brought under Winston's care, we had command of the seas from the onset; we had chased enemy raiders off the oceans of the world in a comparatively short space, and for the rest of the war, except for a few minor excursions—Jutland was the chief—the German fleet dared not put out from its harbours of refuge.

The first role of the British Navy was to safeguard the transport of the British Expeditionary Force to France. The Grand Fleet in full majesty patrolled the North Sea not far from the German coast, challenging the enemy to come out and try to reach the troopships plying to and fro across the English Channel. Not a German ship appeared. The transportation of the B.E.F. was accomplished without the remotest attempt at interference. Not a man of its entire company was drowned.

Before the end of the month of August the Battle of Heligoland Bight had brought havoc to the enemy light cruisers, three of which were crippled and three sunk, without loss to our Fleet. It was a lesson that made the Germans hug the safety of their shores more assiduously than ever.

With the war at sea so auspiciously begun, the First Lord could allow his mental vision to range over other fields. As a spare-time occupation he undertook, at Lord Kitchener's request, the responsibility for the aerial defence of Britain, there being no aerial force available for the purpose except the 'planes with which the Admiralty had provided itself to guard dockyards and ports.

Here I must break in upon the narrative to touch briefly on the part that Winston played in the development of the Air Force as the third Defence Service. It gives yet another instance of his vision in estimating the possibilities of a new invention.

Oil for ships, tanks to beat trenches, and aeroplanes—in the development of these three ideas and their application to the national purpose, not a little is owed to Winston Churchill.

It was only in the years immediately before the catastrophe of 1914, that the aeroplane had proved itself. Bleriot flew the Channel in 1909. In 1911 a Bleriot monoplane travelled at 81 miles an hour ; in 1912 a French pilot exceeded 100 miles. With these advances made, the more open minds began to explore the possibilities of the 'plane as a weapon of war. The mass of conservative opinion in the Services was not impressed.

It was fortunate that the political heads of both Navy and Army were men receptive of new ideas. Winston at the Admiralty was no less impressed than Jack Seely at the War Office. They took up the exploitation of the air in a spirit of happy rivalry, like schoolboys with a new toy. Each strove to go ahead of the other—which was of benefit to the new arm, though there was inevitably some overlapping of activities.

Under this eminent patronage military aviation made progress. By 1912 the new service had won sufficient recognition to be accorded the dignity of an establishment of its own.

The Royal Flying Corps came into being. Its parentage was attested by its dual structure—a naval wing and a military wing, bound together somewhat loosely by an Air Committee on which there were representatives of the two Services, men of science and the political heads of the Departments.

In 1913, Winston and Seely announced to a startled public that they had done a deal over airships. It was an unparalleled piece of inter-departmental barter and each Minister complimented himself that he had got the better of the other. Seely gained for the Army a credit of £25,000 odd from the Admiralty budget and for this sum Winston secured a fleet of airships for the Admiralty.

There was an outcry from the Army service chiefs. The Military Aeronautics Directorate invoked the heavens against the politicians. The General Staff rocked with fury—but the deal had been done and the public service benefited. When the war came the airships were invaluable for coast reconnaissance and submarine hunting.

Winston, when the war began, lent his powerful support to the movement for creating an independent Ministry to control and develop the new Corps, but at that time the resources in men and machines were hopelessly inadequate. Not until two years afterwards was an Air Board established under Lord Curzon.

Two Air Forces controlled by two ministers led to some anomalous situations in the early months of the war. While some of Winston's 'planes were allocated to the defence of the Home Front, others were despatched to collaborate with the Armies in North-eastern France. It was not an ideal arrangement, but at least it produced action. There is a racy description of the situation in the memoirs of Air Vice-Marshal Sir Sefton Brancker, Director of Civil Aviation, who perished in the R. 101 Airship disaster near Beauvais in October, 1930.

Brancker viewed events from the Army standpoint of Deputy Director of Military Aeronautics and was thus less sympathetic to aerial activities directed from the opposite side of Whitehall. He wrote<sup>1</sup>:

"Immediately after mobilization I went over to the Admiralty and had a talk with my opposite number, Murray Sueter, about the allocation of available contractors, aircraft and engines. He was prepared to draw up as clear a line of delimitation as possible between the trade activities of the two Departments. We divided available contractors to suit this policy.

"I endeavoured to co-operate thoroughly with him and I think that he was anxious to meet the wishes of the War Office in every way possible : but he was not his own master, for the vigorous and enthusiastic personality of Mr. Winston Churchill had come into play. He believed in aviation. Even at that time he had realized the enormous possibilities of the attack on hostile territory by an independent air force, and had grasped the necessity of some central control over all aeronautical matters. But the Admiralty conceived that this control should be vested in the Admiralty, with the independent force part and parcel of the Navy, his particular responsibility at the moment ; and to this end he worked assiduously during the last months of 1914.

"The first sign of this policy was his sudden announcement that the Naval Wing of the Royal Flying Corps had become the Royal Naval Air Service—this without any reason or warning being given to the War Office.

"The second step was of interest and of considerable importance. Responsibility for Aerial Home Defence lay with the War Office, and I had already had some difficulty in persuading Lord Kitchener at that time that it was utter waste of our small available resources to keep good pilots and aircraft pottering about the coast on the chance of meeting a Zeppelin. I constantly urged that as matters stood every available pilot and aeroplane should either be at the Front or busy training new pilots at home. This apparent neglect

<sup>1</sup> *Sefton Brancker*, by Norman Macmillan, a mine of information on the development of aviation from the earliest days.

of Home Defence led to considerable outside criticism, and Winston Churchill began to use it as a whip with which to chastise the War Office.

"Shortly afterwards, at a Cabinet meeting, Kitchener asked Winston to take over the responsibility of Aerial Home Defence. Lord Kitchener realized that offence was the truest form of defence, that every available military aeroplane would be required with the Army on the Western Front for some time to come, and that aerial home defence by aircraft had not developed sufficiently to be worth talking about. The creation of the first Anti-Aircraft Corps for the Defence of London was then placed in the hands of Commodore Murray Sueter.

"The demands of the Expeditionary Force were so great that it was obvious that every new military pilot and aeroplane would be fully and most usefully employed from the moment of their creation. In the Naval Air Service matters were quite different. Senior Naval Officers had not been educated to the use of aviation and had no experience of aircraft ; the Grand Fleet was not immediately employed in active operations, and the seaplane was not nearly so far developed as the landplane. The result was that the Navy made no real demand on the Royal Naval Air Service at all, and their magnificent personnel and material were practically unemployed so far as the Fleet was concerned. Neglected by the Navy and rejected by the Army, the Royal Naval Air Service, backed by Winston Churchill's vitality, naturally had to find some scope for their activities. On August 27, 1914, Commander Samson with a R.N.A.S. Squadron of aeroplanes landed at Dunkirk, and from that date the R.N.A.S. undertook many duties which were far more nearly akin to the land than to the sea.

"Commander Samson's operations on the left of the Army might almost form the subject of an epic by themselves. With a handful of men, a few nondescript aeroplanes, and some commandeered cars with improvised armour, he was here, there and everywhere, terrorizing marauding Uhlans and inspiring French Territorials. I remember a most enterprising telegram from Commander Samson addressed to Lord French personally, which in the existing state of our communications had to come through the War Office ; he briefly reported that he was operating on the Field Marshal's left and would be glad of information regarding the movements of the British Army as he wished to co-operate !

"The Naval Air Service undertook a most remarkable series of air raids on German airship sheds at Cologne and Friedrichshafen, deeds of daring which were in accordance with the finest traditions of the Navy, but which, unfortunately, were rather loudly boomed in the Press. Before this I had always rather believed in the popular myth that the Navy was really the 'Silent Service'. The

comparative success and glamour of these enterprises led the First Lord to undertake a big programme of air operations overland. The R.N.A.S. efforts at Dunkirk in bomb attacks on the submarine bases near Zeebrugge and the observation of the fire of the monitors were sound and quite justified ; but there were other enterprises which, although on the surface they appeared harmless and even useful, actually led to a very evil competition between the Army and Navy in the purchase of aeroplanes and engines ; this deprived the Expeditionary Force of aeroplanes which were frittered away on side issues, although the Army in the Field constituted the decisive factor in all the operations in progress at the time.”

Even the Naval Air Service did not exhaust Winston’s capacity for spare-time occupations. He found time to give directions for the construction of an armoured car, which showed a mind groping towards the invention of the tank. In the Admiralty records you can find the instructions the First Lord issued on the subject. He called for the construction of armoured motor cars that would be provided with the means of crossing trenches. “An arrangement of planks capable of bridging a ten or twelve-feet span quickly and easily should be carried with every ten or twelve machines,” the instructions ran.

The first resultant tank in embryo, designed by Admiral Bacon, carried a portable bridge forward, which it dropped down on reaching a trench and raised automatically on passing.

Next, the fertile mind of the First Lord was engaged upon the organization of the Dunkirk Circus.

Dunkirk was to become the scene in World War the Second of the miracle of deliverance of the British Armies which had been cut off by the Germans in 1940. In September 1914, this vital Channel port lay back from the route along which the German hordes were pouring into France. Their lines of communication, those sensitive arteries which are essential to an army’s existence, ran from east to west, not far away. Joffre, then French Commander-in-Chief, suggested that a British force should make a landing at Dunkirk, held by the French, and make a demonstration with the object of causing the Germans anxiety over their communications and the diversion of some of their troops to deal with the menace.

Kitchener appealed to Churchill to carry the thing through with marines—again the Navy had the only forces available. So under the First Lord’s inspiration the Circus came into being.

‘Circus’ is a word not ill suited to describe the force of marines and yeomanry that trooped in and out of Belgian villages in a fleet of motor buses. In contrast with an army that seeks to do much by stealth, the Circus was intended to do little and parade much,

so as to ensure that its well-advertised movements caused as great concern as possible to the enemy. In this it was successful.

Churchill was highly delighted with the activities of his force and he made frequent visits of inspection to see how the fun was going.

According to the accounts Lord Beaverbrook has given, the Circus had a not inconsiderable influence on Churchill's fortunes by causing Asquith to have for the first time a sense of misgiving about the judgment of the First Lord. The Prime Minister had been as amused as Winston himself when the Circus opened, but while the First Lord's relish increased, Asquith's waned. There was something undignified in the affair which could not have appealed to the sedate Asquithian mind for long. His irritation grew when he had to take charge of the Admiralty in the First Lord's absence.

In the end Asquith had the Circus wound up.

And yet, these promenaders had caused a serious disturbance of the German plans. Reports of the presence of British marines in Belgium worked upon the enemy's concern. Anxieties stimulated the German imagination into the belief that their flank was threatened by 40,000 men. Coming at a moment of crisis, the reports accentuated a German retreat and saved the Allied armies.

Another and more serious intervention by the First Lord in the operations on land was made in October, when he figured in the episode of the expedition to Antwerp. This was one of the decisive events in the opening phases of the war. Its results were of the highest importance to the Allies, yet Winston emerged from it with a damaged reputation. His enemies distorted the facts to damage him politically and undermine his position.

In the month of October, though the decisive battle of the Marne had been won, the French were still in retreat. The Germans were still pouring through Belgium. Up in the north the fortress of Antwerp still held out—though Liège and Namur had fallen—protecting the Allied left flank and the Channel ports.

Orders were given to the German Commanders that Antwerp must be taken at all costs, and a terrific onslaught was begun. The Belgians could not continue their resistance, and sent urgent appeals for aid to Paris and London. They decided to fall back the following day, thereby causing consternation to the Allies, whose left flank would have been fatally exposed,

On the night of October 2nd Winston Churchill was travelling from London to Dover by special train on his way to Dunkirk. The journey to the coast was half completed when the train was stopped and hurriedly sent back to London. The First Lord had been recalled at Lord Kitchener's request, to undertake at midnight an immediate journey to Antwerp. British reinforcements could not reach the city for some days and Winston must somehow induce the defenders to hold out.

Asquith was out of town and heard of the matter the following day. He made the following entry in his Diary :

"I was away but Grey, Kitchener and Winston held a late meeting and, I fancy with Grey's rather reluctant consent, the intrepid Winston set off at midnight and ought to have reached Antwerp about nine o'clock. He will straight away see the Belgian Ministers, Sir J. French is making preparations to send assistance by way of Lille. I had a talk with K. this morning and we are both anxiously awaiting Winston's report. I do not know how fluent his French is, but if he is able to do justice to himself in a foreign tongue the Belges will have to listen to a discourse the like of which they have never heard before. I cannot but think that he will stiffen them up."

Winston went duly impressed with the importance of his mission, and resolved to fulfil it. His arrival in the uniform of Elder Brother of Trinity House at the Belgian headquarters was in the highest degree spectacular. An American newspaper correspondent has preserved the scene for us.

"At one o'clock that afternoon," he wrote, "a big, drab-coloured touring-car, filled with British naval officers, drove down the Place de Mer, its horn sounding a hoarse warning, took the turn into the March-aux-Souliers on two wheels, and drew up in front of the hotel. Before the car had fairly come to a stop the door of the tonneau was thrown violently open and out jumped a smooth-faced, sandy-haired, stoop-shouldered, youthful-looking man in undress Trinity House uniform. . . .

"As he charged into the crowded lobby he flung his arms out, in a nervous characteristic gesture, as though pushing his way through a crowd. It was a most spectacular entrance, and reminded me for all the world of a scene in a melodrama where the hero dashes up bare-headed on a foam-flecked horse, and saves the heroine, or the old homestead, or the family fortune, as the case may be."

Critics at home might scoff. The arrival impressed the Belgians. They were inspired into fighting on.

Next the First Lord appealed to the Prime Minister in London to be appointed to command the Allied forces to be sent to Antwerp's relief.

"If it is thought by H.M. Government that I can be of service here," he wrote, "I am willing to resign my office and undertake command of relieving and defensive forces assigned to Antwerp in conjunction with Belgian Army, provided that I am given necessary military rank and authority, and full powers of a commander of

a detached force in the field. I feel it my duty to offer my services, because I am sure this arrangement will afford the best prospects of a victorious result to an enterprise in which I am deeply involved. I should require complete staff proportionate to the force employed, as I have had to use all the officers now here in positions of urgency. I wait your reply. Runciman would do Admiralty well."

Lord Kitchener was prepared to give Churchill the job. "I will make him a Major-General," he said, "if you will give him the command." The Government, however, were not prepared to make the appointment.

Again there are interesting entries in Asquith's Diary :

"October 5. I found when I arrived here this morning a telegram from Winston who proposes to resign his office to take command in the Field of this great military force. Of course, without consulting anybody I at once telegraphed to him warm appreciation of his mission and his offer, with a most decided negative saying that we could not spare him at the Admiralty. I had not meant to read it at the Cabinet but, as everybody, including K., began to ask how soon he was going to return, I was at last obliged to do so. Winston is an ex-Lieutenant of Hussars and would, if his proposal had been accepted, have been in command of two distinguished Major-Generals not to mention Brigadiers, Colonels, etc., while the Navy are only contributing their light brigade."

"October 6. Winston persists in remaining there, which leaves the Admiralty here without a head and I have had to tell them to submit decisions to me. I think that Winston ought to return now that a capable General is arriving. He has done good service."

Winston remained to assist in the operations, in which some 8,000 men of the Royal Naval Division took part. Sir Ian Hamilton paid tribute to the manner in which the First Lord took charge of them. "Churchill," he wrote, "handled them as if he were Napoleon and they were the Old Guard, flinging them right into the enemy's opening jaws."

Lord Mottistone, who was sent by Sir John French to find out what was being done at Antwerp, gives another picture of Winston in command.

"From the moment I arrived," he wrote, "it was apparent that the whole business was in Winston's hands. He dominated the whole place—the King, ministers, soldiers, sailors. So great was his influence that I am convinced that with 20,000 British troops he could have held Antwerp against almost any onslaught."

Antwerp could not be held, but the Belgians, heartened by the presence of Winston and the marines, delayed the enemy for the

space of five invaluable days. And what is more, the Belgian Army made a valiant recovery and got away intact. By this means the Belgian coast and the Channel ports were saved.

In the fighting some 900 men of the Naval Brigade were taken prisoners, 50 were killed, 130 or so were wounded, and a couple of battalions that inadvertently crossed the Dutch frontier were interned. These circumstances and the fact that Antwerp was not held were made the subject of attacks on the First Lord.

His control of affairs at the Admiralty had already given rise to much criticism in Conservative circles, where they called him the 'amateur Commander-in-Chief of the Navy.' The manner of his departure for Belgium provided new scope for the inventions of the malicious. Stories were put abroad of Churchill talking Kitchener into sending him to Antwerp and then wilfully acting in excess of his instructions. The charge of involving 'a pitiful loss of brave men's lives' was laid at his door.

It is a pity that Asquith did not deal with some of the critics and speak in defence and praise of the First Lord's efforts of which he should have had a juster appreciation than their political opponents. From entries in the Diary you can see that Asquith was not one of the staunchest supporters of the First Lord. He was not one of those large-minded men among whom Lord Mottistone has placed Winston—men who have "the rare and engaging quality not only of supporting you when you are right, but also of supporting you when you are wrong."

On October 11th, Asquith's soldier son, Brig.-Gen. Arthur Asquith, who was himself at Antwerp, visited him, and the Prime Minister noted in his Diary :

"I had a long talk after midnight, in the course of which he gave me a full and vivid account of the expedition to Antwerp and the retirement. Marines, of course, are splendid troops and can go anywhere and do anything but Winston ought never to have sent the two Naval Brigades. I was assured that all the recruits were being left behind and that the main body at any rate consisted of seasoned naval reserve men. As a matter of fact, only about a quarter were Reservists and the rest were a callow crowd of the most raw recruits most of whom had never fired off a rifle while none of them had ever even handled an entrenching tool."

Later in October Winston sought an interview with the Prime Minister who, in his Diary, painted a satirical picture of the First Lord.

"I have had a long call from Winston who, after dilating in great detail on the actual situation, became suddenly very confidential and implored me to take a conventional view of his future.

"Having, as he says, tasted blood these last few days he is beginning like a tiger to raven for more and begs that sooner or later, and the sooner the better, he may be relieved of his present office and put in some kind of military command. I told him that he could not be spared from the Admiralty. He scoffed at that, alleging that the naval part of the business is practically over as our superiority will grow greater and greater every month.

"His mouth waters at the thought of Kitchener's Armies. Are these glittering commands to be entrusted to dug-out trash, bred on the obsolete tactics of twenty-five years ago, mediocrities who have led a sheltered life, mouldering in military routine?

"For about an hour he poured forth a ceaseless invective and appeal and I much regretted that there was no shorthand writer within hearing as some of his unpremeditated phrases were quite priceless. He was, however, three parts serious and declared that a political career was nothing to him in comparison with military glory."

These entries of the Prime Ministerial diarist show clearly enough why he did not lend the authority of his name to the defence of Winston's reputation. For all the superiority of his brain Asquith—it is plain to see in the all-revealing Diary—was lacking in elevation of character. He indulged the cynical amusement of the spectator of life's little ironies, but of the strength and compassion of the noblest minds there is little trace.

History, when history came to be written, with juster appreciation gave Antwerp its place as one of the key points when the war was won and lost.

Winston Churchill's achievement in prolonging the resistance at Antwerp is seen as one of the principal successes in his career. Here is the impartial verdict of the British official history of the War :

"The British effort to save Antwerp had failed. Nevertheless it had a lasting influence on the operations. Until Antwerp had fallen, the troops of the investing force were not available to move forward on Ypres and the coast ; and though, when they did, they secured Zeebrugge and Ostend without a struggle, they were too late to secure Nieuport and Dunkirk and turn the northern flank of the Allies, as was intended. Further, the whole general movement of the German forces in the north was affected. The advantages of a day, nay, even a few hours, in the advance of the Germans on Ypres or an equal delay in the arrival of the French and British reinforcements might have tipped the scale to the enemy's side. Had events turned out more favourably for the main Allied armies in the first week of October, the defence of Antwerp might have proved decisive."

## CHAPTER II

*Recall of Fisher*

IN November 1914 Winston, taking his political life in his hands, recalled Lord Fisher to his old place as First Sea Lord. Thus destiny brought together the greatest naval administrator of his time and the greatest sailor since Nelson in a co-operation which was to have a decisive effect on their careers and on the career of the Asquith Government.

It was a venturesome step for Winston to take, for Fisher, man of intense dynamism of character, of intense likes and intense hatreds, had in his day been the chief figure in the controversy that had split the Navy into two rival camps and had involved the politicians as well. The old animosities had died down but there was no guarantee, with a man of Fisher's turbulence, that the flames might not break out afresh.

Winston declared that the risk was worth running to get Fisher back as Service head of the Navy. In this the First Lord was guided not only by his estimate of the work that the old Admiral could do for the nation. There were younger admirals who might have been expected to do as well, but they had not the reputation in the country and, however good they might be, they would not serve to the same degree to provide a substantial prop for Winston's administration. And of some such prop he was in need.

The fact was that by November his star no longer burned with quite the same lustre as when the war began. For this there were a variety of reasons. The failure of the Antwerp expedition was pre-eminent.

Then there was the sinking of three cruisers which made him the target for renewed attacks. Their loss was laid at his door and he was accused of having sent them to their doom by having acted against the advice of the Sea Lords. One writer in what the First Lord was justified in describing as a venomous brochure, actually committed himself to this monstrous statement :

"The loss of the *Aboukir*, *Cressy* and *Hogue* with 1,459 officers and men killed, occurred because, despite the warnings of Admirals, Commodores and Captains, Mr. Churchill refused until it was too late to recall them from patrol so carried on as to make them certain to fall victims to the torpedoes of our active enemy."

In point of fact, Winston, before the disaster occurred, had given instructions to terminate the very patrol system that caused these

ships to be lost. Delay in carrying out his orders had occurred unknown to him. These facts would have been a complete answer to the allegations inspired by malicious minds, but it was against the national interest for the facts to be publicly stated.

Looking back, over a quarter of a century later, you may find it difficult to understand either that such disgraceful things should have been said about the man who was serving the country so well at the Admiralty or that being said, should have found listeners to credit them. It is only by taking into account the bitterness of party politics in the years before the war that you can see events in their proper setting.

Home Rule for Ireland had been the principal subject of debate for a generation. It had brought the country to the verge of civil war. Disputes over tariffs, Lloyd George budgets and House of Lords reform had accentuated party bitterness.

In all these controversies Winston Churchill had played a leading part. Deserting from the ranks of the Tories to the political enemy, he had become with Lloyd George the principal attacking force in the ranks of the Liberals. He had baited the Tories, taunted them, smitten them hip and thigh—and always, hardest to forget, he had emerged from the conflicts on the winning side.

When the war came, Winston, labouring devotedly at the Admiralty, forgot in a flash the animosities of party politics. All his energies were bent in an instant on winning the war, all his thoughts were concentrated on that single purpose.

For the Tories, shut out of office, there was not the same pressure of affairs. The cares and labours of office were not driving the thoughts of past feuds from their minds. They looked upon the First Lord with no kindly eyes, and at each loss of ships at sea found new cause for criticism. At last they had worked themselves into such a condition of alarm that they conceived the continuance of Winston at the Admiralty as a menace to the Allied cause.

In the opening months of the war, Prince Louis of Battenberg was in office as First Sea Lord. Because of his German origin, Prince Louis became a target for abuse from perfervid patriots who were unaware of the valuable work he was doing. For a while no heed was paid to this clamour—a circumstance that caused some damage, politically, to Churchill—but at length Prince Louis came to the conclusion that it was impairing his usefulness on the Admiralty Board and he tendered his resignation.

It was then that Churchill brought Lord Fisher back from retirement. For three years Fisher had been Winston's unofficial mentor and there was an affectionate friendship between the young Sea Lord and the old sea dog, now a veteran of 74. But despite his years, Fisher had given sufficient indication that his volcanic powers were still largely unimpaired by age. He leaped at the

opportunity to take charge of the Navy that was largely the product of his inspired creation.

"He was," wrote Winston in his account of affairs, "strongly inspired with the sense of a message to deliver and a mission to perform."

A mission to perform—there, if you come to think of it, was a situation fraught with explosive possibilities, for Fisher was not the only man with that view. The old Admiral might regard himself as the creator of the Navy, but Winston, too, had had a hand in events. He had seen that Navy prepared against the day and he had, in defiance of Cabinet orders, mobilized the Fleet in the hour of crisis. Winston no less than Fisher could reckon himself a man with a mission.

Forceful characters, both, Fisher and Churchill had in common a tenacity of purpose and determination not easily to be turned. While the two forces were working in harmony, the co-operation would be splendid. But if ever there were discord the collision would be catastrophic.

In the first flush of exultation at returning to duty, Fisher could not sufficiently accommodate himself to his political chief. They made an agreement by which neither would take any action without informing the other.

Under another arrangement they made, one or other was on duty on the Admiralty quarter deck almost round the hours of the clock. Fisher was an early riser whose mental vigour slackened by the evening. Churchill altered his routine so that he could be on duty until the early hours while Fisher slept.

So First Lord and First Sea Lord began their co-operation in complete harmony and with beneficial results for the Allied cause upon the high seas.

The firstfruits of Fisher's return to duty were seen in the Battle of the Falkland Islands in which von Spee's squadron, the *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst* and a couple of smaller cruisers, was annihilated. It was Fisher's dynamic methods that got the two British cruisers *Inflexible* and *Invincible* out of port in time to deal with von Spee.

The two cruisers arrived for coaling at Devonport on November 8, and Fisher gave orders that they were to leave on November 11. The dockyard officials declared it to be impossible ; they wanted a week to get the ships ready. The First Sea Lord would have none of it : three days and no more. The dockyard officials replied that brickwork on the boilers of the *Inflexible* could not be finished in time. Fisher replied that the necessary material should be put aboard the *Inflexible* and if the work were not done, then the workmen should sail with her.

The cruiser sailed and sailed to time.

The drive of the septuagenarian seadog was irresistible. His

'Rush'-labelled orders were not to be ignored. Their effect was shown by a marked speeding up in shipbuilding output.

Fisher greatly extended the building programme which had been authorized before he took office, and ordered a number of special ships which would have been needed for the carrying out of his pet idea—a combined Navy and Army operation for the landing of troops in the Baltic to cause confusion behind the German lines. Russian troops, he suggested, could be landed on the Pomeranian coast, that is within one hundred miles of Berlin.

This was Fisher's pet plan and knowing his character you may imagine that he believed in it with all the concentrated faith of his forceful nature. For him the Baltic was, potentially, the decisive theatre of war ; its neglect, a calamitous strategic blunder responsible for most of the disasters that befell the Allied armies.

Writing in 1918, shortly before the war ended, he bewailed the German conquests which gave them control of dominions "greater than the Roman Empire ever possessed at its utmost period of expansion," and added :

"All this terrible calamity directly results from our not going to the *Baltic as the decisive theatre of war* when we could so easily have done so."

This belief in the Baltic plan had an important psychological effect on Fisher's judgment. Always it was in the background of his mind and always it tended to colour his views on Allied strategy. When it was a question of "what plan shall we adopt now?" or "is this operation practicable?" Fisher's opinion was inescapably coloured by his predilections for the Baltic scheme.

It was with this psychological handicap that he was called upon to give his advice on the operations at the Dardanelles and Gallipoli.

## CHAPTER III

### *The Dardanelles*

THE Dardanelles and Gallipoli—what incredible heroism and what incredible human folly are betokened by those two names.

For men of the Army and the Navy the Dardanelles and Gallipoli mean deeds of renown as imperishable as any in our annals. For the statesmen who then formed our War Council they are words of reproach for muddle and delay that cost good men's

lives. For Winston Churchill they are names that recall the greatest personal misfortune in his career.

At the time, and for some time afterwards, Winston was made the chief target for censure over the failure of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli. A Royal Commission cleared his reputation, but some of the mud stuck. In the 'Twenties you could frequently hear it said that "Churchill landed us in the mess of Gallipoli." Even during the present war, men who should know better have remarked, "We don't want Winston to land us in another Gallipoli."

The genesis of the Dardanelles operations and the Gallipoli campaign—it is important to differentiate between the two—can be simply explained.

On 31 October, 1914, Turkey declared war on the side of Germany. On 25 November the Dardanelles first came before the War Council. The possibility of an attack was discussed but the question was shelved on Kitchener's advice that the moment was not yet ripe. By the mere raising of the question Ministers became conscious of the fruits of a successful attack, which would open the way to Constantinople. It was only necessary to look at the map to realize the importance of Constantinople, at once the London and Berlin of the Near East. Its capture would be likely to have vital effects on the future policy of the Balkan States, Bulgaria, Greece and Rumania, or on Italy, still neutral at that date but inclined to join the Allies.

Just over a month later, on the second day of January, 1915, an urgent appeal was received from Russia. Grand Duke Nicholas reported that the Russian troops in the Caucasus were being hard pressed and he asked his Allies to undertake some military demonstration against the Turks as a means of relieving Turkish pressure on the Russians.

This brought to a head a controversy amongst Ministers which has been developing for some months.

In the autumn, when deadlock was reached on the Western front, various members of the Government cast their minds about to find the means of winning the war elsewhere. Lloyd George was for the Balkans. Fisher preferred his pet plan for amphibious operations in the Baltic. Winston advocated a naval-cum-military attack on Constantinople. A memorandum from the Secretary to the War Council, Lt.-Col. Hankey, stated the case for operations against Turkey.

Each project had its secondary supporters and a tripartite tug-of-war developed. It was rendered the more inconclusive by the resolve of Sir John French, C.-in-C. on the Western front, not to release a single man or a rifle of his command for any adventure elsewhere. Kitchener backed Sir John.

Such was the division amongst the politicians at home when

Russia's S O S was received. It was one that could not be ignored. At the time when the Anglo-French forces were in the greatest peril at Mons, the Russians had invaded East Prussia as a means of drawing off some of the German divisions. Now in the time of their own need the Russians must be given relief. To this even Kitchener agreed. He replied to the Grand Duke that something would be done against the Turks and he sent a memorandum to the First Lord of the Admiralty pointing to the Dardanelles as offering the best chance. Kitchener wrote :

"I do not see that we can do anything that will seriously help the Russians in the Caucasus. The Turks have evidently withdrawn most of their troops from Adrianople, and are using them to reinforce their forces against Russia, probably sending them across the Black Sea. We have no troops to land anywhere. The only place where a demonstration might have some effect on stopping reinforcements going East would be the Dardanelles. We shall not be ready for anything big for some months."

The following day Fisher, who had been informed of the various tentative schemes and of the Russian appeal, wrote to the First Lord recommending military operations against Turkey on a grandiose scale. As they involved the co-operation of Greece and Bulgaria and the despatch of 75,000 troops it was not within the range of possibilities, for the Bulgars were not prepared to fight, the Russians themselves objected to Greek participation and there were no troops to be found anyhow.

As part of his operations Fisher also envisaged a naval attack to force the Straits, an operation which he proposed should be assigned to Admiral Sturdee with ships that were becoming obsolete. In the Fisher scheme this was only one part of the vast, combined operations. But when the other parts fell to the ground, attention became directed to this alone.

Winston, hitherto, had looked upon the capture of the Straits as a matter for the Army, but the suggestion made by the First Sea Lord attracted him at once. The prize to be won was rich enough to warrant great risks. Could the Navy, unaided by the Army, undertake the task ? At least it was worthy of investigation.

With Fisher's full concurrence he telegraphed to Admiral Carden, in charge at the Dardanelles : "Do you consider the forcing of the Straits by ships alone a practicable operation ? It is assumed that older battleships fitted with mine-bumpers would be used. Importance of result would justify severe loss."

Two days later Carden replied that though the Straits could not be rushed they might be forced by extended operations. The Admiral was then invited to submit a detailed plan. He outlined the possible operations under four heads :

Destruction of the defences at the entrance to the Straits ;

Action inside the Straits to clear up defences ;

Destruction of the defences of the Narrows ;

Sweeping a clear passage through the minefield and advance through the Narrows, followed by a reduction of the forts further up.

The novelty of the proposition outlined by the Admiral consisted in the abandonment of any attempt to rush the Dardanelles and the substitution in its place of a scheme by which the forts would be methodically attacked and destroyed one by one. It squared with the impression produced by the German successes in reducing strong forts on land by their heavy artillery.

On January 13th the War Council met again and Winston presented details of the expert reports he had received. Kitchener gave the naval operations his blessing. Thereafter the Council unanimously decided that the Dardanelles project should be prepared, the actual decision being recorded as follows :

*The Admiralty should prepare for a naval expedition in February to bombard and take the Gallipoli peninsula with Constantinople as its objective.*

It was a curiously worded decision. To force the Straits was possibly within the competence of the Navy. To take a peninsula was a strange task for a fleet. To this confusion the Ministers added another. The majority of those present believed that they had given their final approval to the launching of the attack ; others, the Prime Minister among them, imagined they had done no more than to sanction provisional plans. A few—Lord Fisher and Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson included—left the meeting before Asquith read out the terms of the decision and were not aware that anything had been settled at all.

The First Lord knew that the governing word was ‘prepare’ and proceeded with the preparations. A fortnight later the Council met again. In that interval Fisher developed doubts. He came to two conclusions—first, that the Dardanelles scheme was unsound ; secondly, that he did not wish to attend any further meetings of the Council. The second conclusion did not arise out of the first, was indeed unconnected with it. It did not even spring from his contempt—he made little attempt to disguise it—for what he termed the ‘Aulic’ Council. It arose from the disparity in power and prestige between his own position and that of Lord Kitchener.

These two were the Nelson and Wellington of their day—Kitchener’s reputation being then comparatively undamaged by revelation of his limitations. Kitchener as the leading military authority was political head of the War Office and thus at meeting of the War Council spoke in his own right for the Army. Speak,

did I say—pontificated would be the fitter word, for his views were received with respect due to oracular pronouncements.

When the war began Ministers knew nothing about war and he, they thought, knew everything. Their attitude of humility was enhanced by the disdain with which he treated them. As he did not trust the discretion of their tongues, he imparted few secrets to their keeping, and the appearance of his strength was heightened by his silence.

Fisher, on the other hand, was no more than service head of the Navy ; he could only advise his political chief and leave it for him to represent his views to the Council—or not represent them, as the case might be, for the First Lord did not consider himself bound to echo or even report the First Sea Lord's opinions. Fisher was only one—though he might be the leading—member of the Board and the First Lord was entitled to form his estimate of the sum of opinions expressed.

This position of inferiority was intensely galling to Fisher. He was loyal to his Chief but in his mind he brooded enviously over the discrimination which placed the greatest living sailor so far inferior to the greatest living soldier.

The result was that he informed the Prime Minister that he did not wish to attend further meetings of the War Council, whereupon Asquith summoned First Lord and First Sea Lord to meet him. At this conference, held in the Prime Minister's private room on 28 January, Fisher opposed the Dardanelles plan, representing that it interfered with his own projects for amphibious operations against the Germans on coasts nearer home. Asquith expressed himself in agreement with Churchill. Fisher's disagreement was not overcome but he withdrew his objection to attending the Council.

A full meeting of the Council followed shortly afterwards. The members, with a celerity unusual for them, prepared to sanction the launching of the Dardanelles naval attack. Many of them gave the scheme their blessing.

Kitchener's opinion was that the naval attack was "vitally important." Balfour found it difficult to imagine a more helpful operation. Edward Grey was impressed by the diplomatic possibilities—it might finally check Bulgaria from throwing in her lot with the Germans and it would influence the whole of the Balkans.

Fisher was disconcerted. He had not been prepared for so prompt a decision by the 'Aulic' Council. But his mind was made up—rather than be associated with the Dardanelles plan he would resign office. He rose from the table and made to retire both from the room there and then, and from office immediately thereafter.

Kitchener noticed his action and surmised his intention. The greatest soldier acted promptly, induced the greatest sailor not to

pass from the room and drew him aside into the window recess. There in hushed tones, rendered less inarticulate than usual by the urgency of the moment, he appealed to him not to carry his objections to the Dardanelles plan to the point of resignation. After all, he argued, Fisher was the only one present who disagreed with the proposed operation ; and even if he thought the scheme unsound, there were overwhelming political reasons why it should be at least attempted.

Fisher reluctantly gave in to Kitchener's entreaty and resumed his seat. He agreed to carry on though the Dardanelles attack was to proceed, but I should not imagine that any member of the Council was under any misapprehension about his continued and unabated opposition to what they were determined on. No one, however, thought it necessary to ask him to state the reasons for his opposition, and Fisher himself did not consider that he was entitled, unasked, to inform them.

When the Royal Commission came to enquire into the matter, a point was made that Fisher was not asked for and did not volunteer his opinions. Personally I cannot see that it would have made any difference. Because of the Russian appeal, the Dardanelles diversion was considered to be a political necessity ; with or without Fisher's blessing the Council were resolved that it should be attempted.

There is no need here to re-tell in detail the tale of the Navy's operations. Sufficient to indicate in outline that the first bombardment took place on 19 February ; the results were not decisive, but fairly satisfactory. By the beginning of March the outer defences of the Dardanelles had been destroyed. The first phase had been successfully accomplished. The intermediate and inner defences remained. The first attempts to reduce these failed and it was not until 18 March that an onslaught could be made by the whole of the available Allied fleet. In the interval Admiral Carden had been incapacitated by ill-health from continuing to direct the operations and he was succeeded by his second in command, Admiral de Robeck.

The great attack opened auspiciously and then at the moment when fate seemed to smile there was a sudden change. A row of mines which had escaped the attentions of our sweepers took toll of our ships. In a short space of time three battleships had been lost and three others had been badly damaged. De Robeck decided to break off the engagement for the day. He only wished for time to readjust his plans before resuming. Winston consulted with his naval experts and reported to the War Council. The continuance of the operations was authorized and hopes still ran high.

Before another week had run its course, however, there came telegrams from the Dardanelles which transformed the situation. General Sir Ian Hamilton had been sent out to report on the operations from the standpoint of the Army and having consulted

with him Admiral de Robeck recommended postponing resumption of the naval offensive until the Army could co-operate.

Winston received this message with consternation. The Admiral's advice ran counter to all his opinions and to all his hopes. Why break off when the prize was already partly won? Why give the enemy the benefit of delay? Why send the Army in to meet an enemy forewarned and prepared by the Navy's attack? Better by far go ahead.

He convened a meeting of the Admiralty War Group. He placed before them a telegram for dispatch to the Dardanelles to instruct de Robeck to renew the attack at the first available opportunity. The telegram was never sent. The Chief of the Staff (Admiral Oliver) concurred in the sending of the instructions, but it was opposed by Lord Fisher, by Admiral Wilson, and by Admiral Jackson. They would not overrule the man on the spot.

Winston was not able to move them from their decision. He expostulated, but in vain. He consulted the Prime Minister. Asquith agreed with his views, but that made no difference. In Winston's phrase "The 'No' principle had become established in men's minds and nothing could ever eradicate it."

The Admiral on the spot said 'No' to going on. The Board of the Admiralty said 'No' to overruling the Admiral. And the Prime Minister said 'No' to overruling the Board. No became never. The Fleet waited in vain for the opportunity to resume the attack in the Narrows.

Winston is reproached for having sought to bring about that one more attempt. To Fisher's biographer, Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, it was a mark of the gambler's recklessness—"the 'fatal once more' is the seductive will-o'-the-wisp of the gambler—it is the vain hope which is the cause of his ultimate ruin."

But the gambler must have been justified in his faith had the operations been resumed. The abandonment of the attack caused no more surprise to the First Lord in London than it did to the enemy and enemy's high command. So little ammunition had the Turkish gunners left that on that 18 March they reckoned defeat to be inevitable. The medium howitzers and minefield batteries had fired off half their supply. The long-range heavy explosive shell was nearly all used up—and only the H.E. shell was effective against the armour of warships.

A gambler's throw? Take the verdict of the British official history<sup>1</sup> on the situation of the Turks:

"On the evening of the 18th of March the Turkish command at the Dardanelles was weighed down by the premonition of defeat. More than half the ammunition had been expended, and it could

<sup>1</sup> *Military Operations v. Gallipoli*, by Brig.-Genl. C. F. Aspinall-Oglander.

not be replaced. The antiquated means of fire control had been seriously interrupted. The Turkish gun crews were demoralized and even the German officers present had, apparently, little hope of successful resistance if the Fleet attacked next day. Of the nine rows of mines, many had been in position for six months, and a large proportion of these were believed either to have been carried away by the current, or to have sunk to such a depth that ships would not have touched them. For the rest, many were of old pattern, and not too trustworthy, and, owing to the shortage of numbers, they were, on an average, 90 yards apart, more than three times the beam of a ship. A German journalist describes the great astonishment of the defenders of the coast forts when the attack suddenly ceased. He records that the German naval gunners who were manning the batteries at Chanak told him later that they had made up their minds that the Fleet would win, and that they themselves could not have held out much longer.

"Turning to the military measures for the defence of the capital, Liman von Sanders, head of the German Military Mission, roundly asserts that the orders issued by Turkish G.H.Q. between the 20th February and 1st March entailed the worst defensive dispositions imaginable, and placed the Dardanelles at the mercy of a hostile landing. 'If the orders given at that moment had been carried out,' he writes, 'the course of the world war would have changed after the spring of 1915, and Germany and Austria would have been constrained to continue the fight alone.'"

Such was the perilous position of the Turks when the naval operations against them were halted; such was the narrowness of their escape; such the effect of those twenty unspotted mines.

Thereafter there was an interval in the British attack. The purely naval phase was ended. And the Army was to be involved in an attempt to pull the Navy's chestnuts out of the fire.

Before proceeding to consider Churchill's responsibility for the Gallipoli landing we must consider events at home where a political crisis was brewing.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Fisher's Mutiny*

By mid-May of the year 1915, events were moving to a crisis—moving indeed to a concentration of crises. Things had not been going well in France; Sir John French, our Commander-in-Chief, was complaining about shortage of supplies. Shells shortage was

producing a crisis. Things had not been going well in Gallipoli. Gallipoli was producing a crisis. Things were not going well at the Admiralty. Tension between First Lord and First Sea Lord was mounting. A Fisher crisis was imminent.

Within the Government ranks there was disquiet. Among the Opposition ranks there was dissatisfaction. Disquiet and dissatisfaction were mirrored in the Press and echoed in the country. A war-time truce prevailed in politics, but the back-bench members of the Opposition were more than restive ; they pressed for the chance to speak out in Parliament and accuse the Government of mismanagement. Bonar Law, the Glasgow ironfounder who had succeeded Arthur Balfour as Tory leader, was with difficulty keeping his wilder men in check.

Churchill was a principal target for Tory criticisms. When anything went wrong at sea they blamed Churchill. When a warship fell victim to a U-boat's torpedo they blamed Churchill. When the Antwerp expedition failed they blamed Churchill. And now that Gallipoli looked like adding to the list of non-successes they blamed Churchill more than ever.

For some of their criticisms of the First Lord they were provided with material by the First Sea Lord. Fisher had always had his contacts in the political world since the days of the *affaire* Beresford. Now, in his growing irritation at Churchill's managing ways at the Admiralty, he was resorting more and more to his political confidants to ease his burden of resentment. He found ready listeners. If Churchill was the man who was imperilling the Navy, then Fisher was its salvation. Fisher could scarcely demur to that.

Winston was scarcely aware of the extent of the mistrust which his administration at the Admiralty inspired. He did not frequent the House in these days. His time was taken up by conduct of naval affairs, the pressing problems of Gallipoli and the delicate task of managing Fisher. In his devotion to his tasks he had practically isolated himself from the larger political world. His concentration was magnificent, but it was a political mistake. Ministers of the Crown derive their strength from Parliament to whom they are responsible. If a minister has the confidence of the House he can afford to ignore the assaults of his enemies. But, if that confidence is lacking, he lies open to attack. By his conduct Winston showed himself to be a better public servant than politician.

Operations at Gallipoli, since the naval assault on the Dardanelles had been succeeded by the attack on land, held out no promise of immediate success. Our troops, landed on 25 April, had a precarious footing on the Gallipoli peninsula but the Turks—forewarned by naval attacks—had improvised trench and barbed wire defences. Reports were received at the Admiralty of the presence of enemy submarines in Mediterranean waters.

Fisher became concerned for the safety of the newest battleship, the *Queen Elizabeth*, which had been sent to test her guns on the Dardanelles defences. He demanded the withdrawal of the battleship. To this Kitchener objected, looking on it as the first sign that the Navy was about to desert the Army. Fisher insisted, with the threat of resignation and, supported by Winston, gained his point. The *Queen Elizabeth* was withdrawn, and it should be added that within a fortnight a dummy of the battleship which was rigged up was torpedoed by a German submarine.

This dispute over one vessel was the herald to a more sustained controversy. Fisher's objections to the Navy's part in the operations and to the diversion of forces there which he wanted to be employed on his own schemes were no longer to be contained. He had not thought it his duty in April to state his views before the War Council, but now in May he wrote to the Prime Minister protesting against the gradual draining of our naval resources from the decisive theatre or war. The old Admiral had founded his original objections to the Dardanelles project on Nelson's dictum that "any sailor who attacked a fort was a fool." His criticism was continued although there was not the same basis for it, since the Army were attacking Gallipoli and the Navy's role was the subsidiary one of safeguarding the Army.

Winston did his best to placate Fisher and succeeded in coming to terms with him once again, but within a few hours all was undone. The following day Fisher launched a new protest to Asquith because he had heard Churchill remark to Kitchener "In the event of the Army's failure the Fleet would endeavour to force its way through."

"I desire to convey to you," Fisher wrote, "that I honestly feel that I cannot remain where I am much longer, as there is an inevitable drain *daily* (almost hourly) on the resources in the decisive theatre of the war.

"But that is not the worst. Instead of the whole time of the whole of the Admiralty being concentrated on the daily increasing submarine menace in home waters, we are all diverted to the Dardanelles, and the unceasing activities of the First Lord, both day and night, are engaged in ceaseless *prodding* of everyone in every department afloat and ashore in the interest of the Dardanelles Fleet, with the result of the huge Armada now there, whose size is sufficiently indicated by their having as many battleships out there as in the German High Seas Fleet! Therefore this purely private and personal letter, intended for your eye alone and not to be quoted, as there is no use threatening without acting, is to mention to the one person who I feel *ought* to know that *I feel that my time is short.*"

Fisher continued his offensive the day following (14 May) at a meeting of the War Council. Kitchener brought up the withdrawal of the *Queen Elizabeth* and protested against the ordering of the battle-

ship away at a time when the Army were fighting on the peninsula with their backs to the sea. Fisher interrupted to declare that he had been opposed to the operations from the start and that both Kitchener and the Prime Minister knew this to be the case.

The Council received the interjection without comment—a fair enough indication that Fisher's attitude was well-known before then. Members proceeded with their discussions. But Winston did not consider he could leave the matter there. The meeting over, he sent a note to the Prime Minister.

"I must ask you," he wrote, "to take note of Fisher's statement to-day that he was against the Dardanelles, and had been all along, or words to that effect. The First Sea Lord has agreed in writing to every executive telegram on which the operations have been conducted, and had they been immediately successful the credit would have been his. But I make no complaint of that.

"I am attached to the Old Boy and it is a great pleasure to me to work with him. I think he reciprocates these feelings. My point is that a moment will arise in these operations when the Admiral and General on the spot will wish and require to run a risk with the Fleet for a great and decisive effort. If I agree with them, I shall sanction it; and I cannot consent to be paralysed by the veto of a friend who, whatever the result, will say, 'I was always against the Dardanelles.'

"But I wish to make it clear to you that a man who says, 'I disclaim responsibility for failure,' cannot be the final arbiter of the measures which may be found vital to success.

"This requires no answer, and I am quite contented with the course of affairs."

Later that evening Winston went to Fisher's room at the Admiralty to continue his role of pacifier. There was a long talk and at its close First Lord and First Sea Lord parted amicably, Winston saying as he left, "Good night, Fisher. We have settled everything and you must go home and have a good night's rest. Things will look better in the morning and we'll pull the thing through together."

So Winston went off to work on the Navy's affairs with the comforting feeling that he had staved off trouble once again. Fisher summoned his Naval Assistant to tell him that, after all, he "need not pack up just yet."

The following, Saturday, morning Winston was walking across the Horse Guards, returning to the Admiralty from a Foreign Office Conference, when his private secretary came running up to him, anxiety plain to see upon his face.

"Fisher," he said, "has resigned, and I think he means it this time."

Fisher, indeed, had not merely resigned, but had quitted his post and was not to be found.

Actually, about that time the First Sea Lord was engaged in conversation with Lloyd George, on whom he had dropped the bombshell of the announcement of his resignation. Fisher further said that he was off to the country, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer insisted that first of all he must see the Prime Minister.

Here was a crisis indeed. What had arisen during the night to produce it since the parting between First Sea Lord and First Lord a few hours before had been amicable?

According to Winston's record of events, he was, that fateful Friday night, engaged on Admiralty work until the small hours. After midnight he received an appeal from the Italian Naval Attaché for the despatch of four light cruisers to reinforce the Italian fleet in the Adriatic. If these ships were to arrive forthwith, it might have a decisive influence on bringing Italy into the war on the side of the Allies.

Fisher had already concurred in the agreement with Italy under which these ships were asked for, and had initialled the instruction for four vessels to be detailed for this service. All that was now required was to accelerate their departure by forty-eight hours.

Rather than call Fisher from his rest, Churchill decided to authorize the matter himself. He marked the file 'First Sea Lord to see after action.'

It appears, however, that this unhappily worded minute did no more than strengthen the decision Fisher had already taken to resign office. That Friday night, four memoranda were sent from First Lord to First Sea Lord, the fourth of which dealt with the sending to the Dardanelles of monitors to release battleships for home waters and two more submarines. There was a brief accompanying letter informing Fisher that the memorandum was sent to him before being circulated so as to give an opportunity for discussion if he considered it necessary.

Captain Crease, Fisher's Naval Assistant, gives the following account of the First Sea Lord's reactions :

"I was working in my room at the Admiralty on the night of the 14th May, when towards midnight Masterton Smith (the First Lord's private secretary, later Sir J. E. Masterton Smith), came in with the minute (No. 4) and covering letter, and said that the First Lord wished the First Sea Lord to have them in the morning

"Masterton Smith asked me to read them through, and I did so. He was evidently uneasy about the minute and asked me 'how I thought the old man would take it.' Knowing well Lord Fisher's frame of mind during the past few days and his letter to the Prime Minister of the day before, and reading that submarines were now included in the proposed reinforcements, in addition to various other ships and materials that Lord Fisher had not mentioned a few

hours earlier, I had no hesitation about my reply. I said at once, that I had no doubt whatever Lord Fisher would resign instantly if he received the minute ; for these new proposals, coming at that moment, would be the last straw.

"Masterton Smith, who also was very familiar with the First Sea Lord and his ways, said he did not think Lord Fisher would go so far as that ; but I repeated that I felt quite certain that he would. After some discussion Masterton Smith said he would tell the First Lord my opinion before definitely handing me the minute to pass on. After some delay—I believe Masterton Smith first spoke to de Bartolomé on the subject before going to Mr. Churchill—he came back with the dispatch-box and said it must be sent on, for the First Lord was certain that Lord Fisher would not object to the proposals ; but the First Lord had also added that, in any case, it was necessary that they should be made. I repeated my warning as to the consequences, and then arranged for the dispatch-box to be delivered early in the morning to Lord Fisher."

In the early morning Fisher opened the dispatch-box. A first glance at the contents aroused his resentment to the full. It appeared to him that Churchill had gone back on the pledge he had given the night before. Thereupon Fisher took up his pen and dashed off a letter of resignation. This had already left his hand when Winston's instruction to send cruisers to Italy was placed before the First Sea Lord. The minute accompanying served to confirm him in his view that it was impossible to continue to serve under Winston.

His decision was made known in letters to the Prime Minister and First Lord. To Asquith he wrote :

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

As I find it increasingly difficult to adjust myself to the increasing policy of the First Lord in regard to the Dardanelles, I have been reluctantly compelled to inform him this day that I am unable to remain as his colleague, and I am leaving at once for Scotland, so as not to be embarrassed, or embarrass you, by any explanations with anyone.

Your admiring Master at Balliol said "Never explain," but I am sure you will understand my position.

Yours truly,  
FISHER.

The letter to Churchill was in pretty much the same terms, the quotation of Jowett's 'Never explain' included.

There was a flurry in Government circles that Saturday—hurried consultations between Prime Minister, First Lord, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. At first Asquith was inclined to treat the matter lightly, "Fisher," he said, "is always resigning. This

is nothing new." Lloyd George, however, was not so sanguine, and his information was good for it was to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the First Sea Lord had gone to unburden himself of his sense of wrongs early that morning. Lloyd George was on the point of leaving Downing Street for the week-end when the veteran Admiral arrived.

"I want to speak to you," he said, and then, in the hearing of the messengers, blurted out, "I have resigned. I can stand it no longer. Our ships are being sunk, while we have a fleet in the Dardanelles which is bigger than the German Navy. Both our Army and Navy are being bled for the benefit of the Dardanelles."

Fisher took refuge in his official residence adjoining the Admiralty and declined to receive any member of the Government. McKenna was sent for, McKenna who had earned Fisher's respect and gratitude for backing him in the days of the Beresford feud. There were drawn blinds in the Admiral's house, but from behind one of them McKenna caught sight of Fisher peering out at him.<sup>1</sup> He insisted on being let in.

There was a painful interview. McKenna used every conceivable argument to induce the First Sea Lord to change his course. Fisher was obdurate. He had struck his colours and he was not going to hoist them again. He did not, however, take train to Scotland but remained on the scene, though declining to deal with any of the routine work of First Sea Lord. If there was any advantage to be gained from the political crisis he had caused he was at hand to gain it.

On the following day, the Sunday, the other Sea Lords were informed of Fisher's resignation. They added the weight of their counsel to the advice Fisher had received from so many sources to go back to duty. They drew up a joint memorandum supporting him in his dissatisfaction at the method of directing the distribution of the Fleet and the conduct of the war "by which orders for controlling movements and supplies appear to be largely taken out of the hands of the First Sea Lord." But they urged that to prevent a national disaster the step of resignation must be averted. Differences of opinion, they advised, should be capable of adjustment by "mutual discussion and concession."

It was not advice that Fisher needed. It would have given him greater satisfaction had they backed up his resignation by tendering their own. He thought that in the moment of crisis they failed in loyalty to him as colleague. He replied tersely :

"My dear friends, I am obliged by your memorandum. If you knew as much as I did I am sure you would not wish me to remain—but my motto is '*never explain*' (and always has been)."

<sup>1</sup> Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, Vol. I, p. 109.

To his private secretary he remarked : "I grieve they (the Sea Lords) allowed themselves to be made use of to send me advice which I did not require and which was exceedingly bad advice."

Winston, even when matters had reached this pass, did not despair of inducing his old friend to change his mind. It has frequently been represented that he was eager to rid himself of Fisher so that he might have as First Sea Lord a pliant figure-head. Actually he strove his utmost by letter—Fisher would not meet him face to face—to induce the First Sea Lord to remain. His first appeal was most persuasive. He wrote :

"In order to bring you back to the Admiralty I took my political life in my hands—as you well know. You then promised to stand by me and see me through. If you now go at this bad moment and therefore let loose on me the spite and malice of those who are your enemies even more than they are mine, it will be a melancholy ending to our six months of successful war and administration. The discussions that will arise will strike a cruel blow at the fortunes of the Army now struggling on the Gallipoli Peninsula and cannot fail to invest with an air of disaster a mighty enterprise which with patience can, and will, certainly be carried to success.

"Many of the anxieties of the winter are past. The harbours are protected, the great flow of new construction is arriving. We are far stronger at home than we have ever been, and the great reinforcement is now at hand.

"I hope you will come and see me to-morrow afternoon. I have a proposition to make to you, with the assent of the Prime Minister, which may remove some of the anxieties and difficulties which you feel about the measures necessary to support the Army at the Dardanelles.

"Though I stand at my post until relieved, it will be a very great grief to me to part from you ; and our rupture will be profoundly injurious to every public interest."

Fisher would not respond to the appeal. He replied at length to Winston, the gist of his letter being contained in the two following paragraphs :

"YOU ARE BENT ON FORCING THE DARDANELLES AND NOTHING WILL TURN YOU FROM IT—NOTHING. I know you so well. I could give you no better proof of my desire to stand by you than my having remained by you in this Dardanelles business up to the last moment against the strongest conviction of my life.

"YOU WILL REMAIN AND I SHALL GO—it is better so. Your splendid stand on my behalf I can never forget when you took your political life in your hands, and I have really worked very hard for you in return—*my utmost* ; but here is a question beyond all personal obligations. I assure you it is only painful to have further conversations. I have told the Prime Minister I will not remain. I have absolutely decided to stick to that decision. Nothing will turn me from it. You say with much feeling that *it will be a very great grief to you to part from me—I am*

certain that you know in your heart no one has ever been more faithful to you than I have since I joined you last October. *I have worked my very hardest.*"

On the Sunday Winston wrote again in terms of extreme conciliation. The method of concession recommended by the Sea Lords could not have been pressed further. Admiral Bacon himself remarks of the actual proposals submitted in this letter :

"He goes on to meet Lord Fisher's views in every way as regards the reinforcements for the Dardanelles, nothing could have been more completely in accord with Lord Fisher's views had it not come too late."

"Your letter is most persuasive," Fisher wrote in his reply, but he would not be turned from his purpose. "Please don't wish to see me. I could say nothing as I have determined not to. I know I am doing right."

There was nothing for Winston to do but acquiesce. That Sunday he dined with the Prime Minister in the country, spending a 'pleasant evening' despite the trouble of the time. He had, it appeared, Asquith's support and on the Monday he went down to the House with a list in his pocket for the constitution of a new Board of Admiralty, Sir Arthur Wilson filling the vacant place of First Sea Lord. The appointments, however, were not destined to be announced.

## CHAPTER V

### *A Tory Ultimatum*

MEMBERS of the Government were not the only persons who had been concerned that week-end in considering the problem of Fisher's resignation. While the Dardanelles dispute had been proceeding, various Opposition members in the House of Commons had received letters from Fisher, worded in the Admiral's customary explosive phrases, denouncing the operations. The Conservatives, to whom the name of Winston Churchill was anathema, instinctively concluded that the Admiral was right and the Minister wrong. They were disposed to agree when in conversation Fisher suggested that "Churchill should go and he ought to succeed as First Lord."<sup>1</sup>

Bonar Law, though he did not endorse Fisher's methods, was aware of his followers' views and indeed shared the mistrust of

<sup>1</sup> Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, Vol. I, p. 106.

Winston. Only a month before the Conservative Leader had attempted to convey to the First Lord some indication of the party's feelings but the intended caution was not diplomatically conveyed. Bonar Law and Winston were temperamentally incapable of appreciating each other's merits. To Lord Beaverbrook (Bonar Law's intimate friend) Winston complained that Bonar had lectured him on his conduct at the Admiralty, "rating me like an angry Prime Minister rebuking an unruly subordinate."

During that week-end of crisis Bonar Law received by post a curious, anonymous communication. In an envelope, without any accompanying letter, was a cutting from a London evening newspaper stating: "Lord Fisher was received in audience by the King and remained about half an hour."<sup>1</sup>

The envelope gave the clue to the mystery—it was addressed in the unmistakable handwriting of Lord Fisher. Bonar Law had no knowledge of the events that had taken place that Saturday but he placed the correct interpretation on this communication—that Fisher had resigned and wished the fact to be known to the Conservative Leader,

Now why should it have been of any consequence to Fisher that the Opposition Leader—and thus the Conservative Party—should be informed of his resignation? If he was simply withdrawing from office and taking refuge in Scotland, as he had informed both Churchill and Asquith, it was of no concern to him what the Opposition Leaders might think or do. This surreptitiously conveyed communication is an all-revealing indication of Fisher's intention—a bid for political support. The resignation so dramatically and violently executed, was not that of a man who was concerned over naval strategy and that alone. It was, as Lord Beaverbrook, with his knowledge of the circumstance, has put it, "directed against the Government as a whole and the subordinate position he occupied under it. A new Government was to make him First Lord to right the Navy's wrongs."

Bonar Law was no party to any Fisher intrigue. But he was concerned over the wider issues raised by the Fisher-Churchill clash. He immediately consulted with Lord Lansdowne on the steps to be taken. Other leaders of the Party had been informed. So, at the very time Winston was making arrangements for replacing Fisher, the Conservative Leaders were resolving that his own tenure of the Admiralty must be terminated.

Bonar Law wrote to the Prime Minister and also arranged an interview with Lloyd George. On receiving confirmation from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that Fisher had resigned, Bonar remarked: "Then the situation is impossible." He explained that his followers would not tolerate the departure of Fisher if Churchill

<sup>1</sup> Lord Beaverbrook, p. 111.

were to stay. If such an announcement were made in the House, then the Conservatives would feel it their duty to break the political truce and denounce the developments at the Admiralty.

Discussion between the two statesmen developed beyond the crisis at the Admiralty, the primary purpose of the interview. In a space it was not merely Churchill's future but the fate of the Liberal Ministry that was in the balance. The inclusion of Conservatives was raised, the word Coalition was spoken and the entire political outlook had been transformed. Lloyd George, we are told, became immediately converted to the idea of an all-party Government. "We must have a Coalition," he said, "the alternative is impossible."

It was a matter beyond the competence of the Chancellor alone. The Prime Minister had become involved. The discussion was continued with him. He acquiesced in the idea for a Coalition, bowing to the inevitable, unpalatable as it was. Bonar Law left to convey the tidings to other Conservative Leaders. They met at Lansdowne House early on the Monday and at the close of their deliberations Bonar Law sent the following letter to the Prime Minister :

LANSDOWNE HOUSE,  
*17th May, 1915.*

DEAR MR. ASQUITH,

Lord Lansdowne and I have learnt with dismay that Lord Fisher has resigned, and we have come to the conclusion that we cannot allow the House to adjourn until this fact has been made known and discussed.

We think the time has come when we ought to have a clear statement from you as to the policy which the Government intends to pursue. In our opinion things cannot go on as they are, and some change in the Constitution of the Government seems to us inevitable if it is to retain a sufficient measure of public confidence to conduct the war to a successful conclusion.

The situation in Italy makes it particularly undesirable to have anything in the nature of a controversial discussion in the House of Commons at present, and if you are prepared to take the necessary steps to secure the object which I have indicated, if Lord Fisher's resignation is in the meantime postponed, we shall be ready to keep silence now. Otherwise, I must to-day ask you whether Lord Fisher has resigned, and press for a day to discuss the situation arising out of his resignation.

Yours, etc.,  
A. BONAR LAW

Of these developments Winston was in entire ignorance when he arrived at the House of Commons that Monday afternoon prepared to announce his new Board of Admiralty. He was told that no such announcement could be made, that the Liberal Ministry was on the point of dissolution and that in the new Government he would no longer be responsible for the Admiralty. Later that same evening

Asquith, in the presence of Lloyd George, offered him the Colonial Office. While this was being discussed—Winston, says Lord Beaverbrook, had actually accepted—there was an urgent call from the Admiralty.

The German High Seas Fleet had put to sea. Winston, as he hurried back to the War Room at the Admiralty, would have been less than human had he not reflected on the changes in his fortunes the next few hours might bring. He was left in sole charge of the Admiralty. If the German Fleet should be engaged by the Navy and Jellicoe should win the victory of a second Trafalgar, then all the miserable tangle of the Dardanelles would be forgotten and the First Lord would be the hero of the hour, his position at the Admiralty unassailable.

Back in the War Room he received confirmation of the report. The entire German Fleet was coming out from its refuge—battle squadrons, scouts, and destroyers.

There was no First Sea Lord for the emergency. But Winston was adequate to the occasion. In a little while messages were on their way to units of the Fleet ordering them to prepare for sea at once and immediate action—to the Home Fleet, the 1st Battle Squadron, the Battle Cruiser Fleet, the 3rd Battle Squadron, and to the commanders of all the lesser units. The enemy would find all our naval power ready to meet him.

These orders given, the First Lord, in compliance with a request arriving by Red Box, had to place his resignation in the Prime Minister's hands. That done, he went to bed early, to await the morrow—a day that might bring such a victory at sea that the letter of resignation would be rendered out of date and out of place.

In his house next to the Admiralty Fisher, too, was waiting for the morrow. He, also, had been told that the enemy squadrons had put out to sea. Winston had sent a message requesting him, as he was still First Sea Lord (his resignation not having been accepted), to take his customary place in the War Room. It was a generous gesture, for in the event of victory Fisher would have had his share in the credit. He declined, however, to enter the Admiralty building. His biographer says he was convinced that the Germans had no intention of making a fight of it, but were merely seeking to learn if the British, by some means, had knowledge of the secret ciphers they were using to direct the operations of their ships. It may be so, but, all the same, even on this occasion, he would not return to his duty.

The morrow came, but it did not bring the hoped-for victory. The German Fleet was out at sea at 7 a.m., but by half-past ten it was apparent that it was on its way back to port. The clash between the navies was not to take place.

The British squadrons returned to the monotony of eternal watchfulness and Winston to the unpalatable realities of the political crisis.

For him the crisis was soon over. The Conservatives were unrelenting in their opposition to his stay at the Admiralty. There was precious little support he got from any source. Asquith seems to have made little effort to retain him ; his fellow Liberals appeared more concerned over their own fate than for his.

He induced Balfour to plead his cause with the Tory leaders, but the appeal was coldly received. Balfour, indeed, was criticized for having made it.

One advocate on the Conservative side did make a strong intervention on Churchill's behalf. This was Max Aitken, now Lord Beaverbrook, proprietor of the *Daily Express* newspaper. For some years the two men had been on friendly terms and Lord Beaverbrook had formed a high opinion of Churchill's merits and capabilities.

"My sympathies," he writes in his account of the affair, "were entirely with Churchill, for I had heard his speeches and read some of Lord Fisher's letters, and I was more impressed by the lucidity of the speeches than by the volubility of the letters.

"I pressed Bonar Law very strongly to retain Churchill at the Admiralty on account of the immense abilities he had already displayed there. Bonar Law replied that it was useless to argue ; that the Tory Party had definitely made up its mind not to have him there—and that, in fact, any attempt to retain Churchill at the Admiralty would result in the complete and sudden collapse of the substructure of the new Coalition Government."

Here was an unexpected, if unsuccessful, champion for which Churchill, in his dark hour, was grateful. His gratitude, indeed, has lasted over the years.

Churchill himself wrote a letter of appeal to Bonar Law, but it brought him only the briefest of acknowledgments, and a reiteration that his departure from the Admiralty was inevitable.

It was a superfluous act of humiliation. The letter set forth in such cogent language the record of his administration at the Admiralty that I cannot forbear from giving it.

ADMIRALTY,  
WHITEHALL,

21.5.15.

MY DEAR BONAR LAW,

The rule to follow is what is best calculated to beat the enemy and not what is most likely to please the newspapers. The question of the Dardanelles operations and my differences with Fisher ought to be settled by people who know the facts and not by those who cannot know them. Now you and your friends, except Mr. Balfour, do not know the facts.

On our side *only* the Prime Minister knows them. The policy and conduct of the Dardanelles operations should be reviewed by the new Cabinet. Every fact should be laid before them. They should decide and on their decision the composition of the Board of Admiralty should depend.

It is not in justice to myself that I am asking for this ; but primarily because of the great operation which is in progress, and for which I bear a tremendous responsibility. With Sir Arthur Wilson's professional aid I am sure I can discharge that responsibility fully. In view of his statement to the Prime Minister and to the naval Lords that he will serve as First Sea Lord under me, and under no one else, I feel entitled to say that no other personal combination will give so good a chance.

If this view of mine should prove to be true it affects the safety of an Army now battling its way forward under many difficulties, and the success of an operation of the utmost consequence for which more than 30,000 men have already shed their blood ; and I suggest to you that it is your duty to refuse to judge so grave an issue until you know the facts.

My lips are sealed in public, but in a few days all the facts can be placed before you and your friends under official secrecy. I am sure those with whom I hope to work as colleagues and comrades in this great struggle will not allow a newspaper campaign—necessarily conducted in ignorance and not untinged with prejudice—to be the deciding factor in matters of such terrible import.

Personal interests and sympathies ought to be strictly subordinated. It does not matter whether a Minister receives exact and meticulous justice. But what is vital is that from the outset of this new effort we are to make together we should be fearless of outside influences and straight with each other. We are coming together not to work on public opinion but to wage war : and by waging successful war we shall dominate public opinion.

I would like you to bring this letter to the notice of those with whom I expect soon to act : and I wish to add the following :

I was sent to the Admiralty 4 years ago. I have always been supported by high professional advice ; but partly through circumstances and partly no doubt through my own methods and inclinations, an exceptional burden has been borne by me. I had to procure the money, the men, the ships and ammunition ; to recast with expert advice the war plans ; to complete in every detail that could be foreseen the organisation of the Navy.

Supported by the Prime Minister, I had last year for 4 continuous months of Cabinet meetings to beat down the formidable attack of the Chancellor of the Exchequer backed by 3/4ths of the Cabinet upon the necessary naval estimates. On the approach of war I had to act far in excess of my authority to make the vital arrangements for the safety of the country. I had to mobilise the Fleet without legal sanction and contrary to a Cabinet decision. I have had to face 9 months of war under conditions no man has known, and which were in the early months infinitely more anxious than those which confront us now.

Many Sea Lords have come and gone, but during all these 4 years (nearly) I have been according to my patent "solely responsible to Crown

and Parliament" and have borne the blame for every failure : and now I present to you an absolutely secure naval position ; a Fleet constantly and rapidly growing in strength, and abundantly supplied with munitions of every kind, an organisation working with perfect smoothness and efficiency, and the seas upon which no enemy's flag is flown.

Therefore I ask to be judged justly, deliberately and with knowledge. I do not ask for anything else.

Yours very sincerely,

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

It was the crowning irony of Winston's fall that the man who brought it about in no way profited from it. On hearing that his friends in the Conservative Party were to join the Ministry, Fisher thought that his hour of triumph was at hand. He actually issued tentative instructions for the operations he would order, drawing up a memorandum for his Naval Assistant beginning "Prospective—get all below cut and dried ready for instant orders being given." It was a clear indication of what he imagined his mutiny was to yield him—indication, too, of the personal reasons that had prompted the mutineer. The first and last measures on the list concerned the evacuation of the troops from the Dardanelles and the ordering home of the naval vessels.

While he was thus preparing for taking over the Admiralty, unpleasant tidings reached him. Asquith, it appeared, was not after all going to make him First Lord, was indeed proposing to appoint Balfour to succeed, and Balfour next to Churchill was to be reckoned chief advocate of the Dardanelles policy. Fisher's chagrin may be imagined. Was he, after all, to be deprived of the position that was his due ? Was he still to be inferior in status to Kitchener ? He took up his pen and launched an ultimatum at the Prime Minister demanding to be placed in complete control of the war at sea. He demanded, too, the exclusion of Churchill and Balfour from the Cabinet. Even Sir Arthur Wilson was on the exclusion list—he had been ready to take over as First Sea Lord and for that must be dismissed from the Admiralty. Only a mind distraught by jealousy could have conceived such a letter as suitable for dispatch to a Prime Minister. The actual terms, in the brusqueness of their arrogance, are :

"If the following six conditions are agreed to, I can guarantee the successful termination of the war, and the total abolition of the submarine menace.

"I also wish to add that since Lord Ripon wished, in 1885, to make me a Lord of the Admiralty, but at my request made me Director of Naval Ordnance and Torpedoes instead, I have served under nine First Lords and seventeen years at the Admiralty, so I ought to know something about it.

"(1) That Mr. Winston Churchill is not in the Cabinet to be always circumventing me. Nor will I serve under Mr. Balfour.

"(2) That Sir A. K. Wilson leaves the Admiralty, and the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the War Council, as my time will be occupied in resisting the bombardment of Heligoland and other such wild projects. Also his policy is totally opposed to mine, and he accepted the position of First Sea Lord in succession to me, thereby adopting a policy diametrically opposed to my views.

"(3) That there shall be an entire new Board of Admiralty as regards the Sea Lords and the Financial Secretary (who is utterly useless). *New measures demand New Men.*

"(4) That I should have complete professional charge of the war at sea, together with the sole disposition of the Fleet and the appointment of all officers of all ranks whatsoever.

"(5) That the First Lord of the Admiralty should be absolutely restricted to Policy and Parliamentary Procedure, and should occupy the same position towards me as Mr. Tennant, M.P., does to Lord Kitchener (*and very well he does it*).

"(6) That I should have the sole absolute authority for all new construction and all dockyard work of whatever sort whatsoever, and complete control over the whole of the Civil Establishments of the Navy.

"(Initialled) F.

"19.5.15.

"PS. The 60 per cent of my time and energy which I have exhausted on nine First Lords *in the past* I wish *in the future* to devote to the successful prosecution of the war. That is the sole reason for these six conditions. These six conditions must be published verbatim, so that the Fleet may know my position."

It seems scarcely necessary to add that Lord Fisher did not remain at the Admiralty. The Prime Minister's reply was of unsurpassable brevity.

DEAR LORD FISHER,

I am commanded by the King to accept your tendered resignation of the office of First Sea Lord of the Admiralty.

Yours faithfully,  
H. H. ASQUITH.

The Churchill-Fisher clash had as its main consequence the installation in office of the first of the Coalition Governments. It also deprived the country of the full benefit of the services of these two outstanding men of ability in the arts of war. To whom is to be ascribed the blame? It is easy enough to be the partisan and declare that Fisher was temperamental or that Winston was meddlesome. The fault seems to lie further back than that. Arthur Balfour, who was not taken in by the partisan appearances of things, gave his judgment on the affair a few years later—and Balfour was

in a position to know the facts from both sides. Writing<sup>1</sup> in September 1917 to his kinsman Robert Cecil (now Viscount Cecil of Chelwood) he delivered himself of the following pronouncement :

"You mention the case of the Dardanelles and draw from it the moral—a very good moral in its way—that civilians ought not to ask soldiers and sailors to carry out operations in which they disbelieve. But there is another moral to be drawn. In the Dardanelles affair the principal actors at home were a soldier without strategical genius who controlled the military machine ; a sailor equally without strategical genius who ought to have controlled but didn't the naval machine, and a brilliant amateur who attempted but failed to dominate both. If ever there were two men between whom hearty co-operation was impossible it was Kitchener and Winston.

"There was the opportunity for the Prime Minister to do what a Prime Minister alone can do, which is to compel subordinate departments to work together. Asquith did nothing. He never seriously attempted to co-ordinate in one homogeneous whole the effort of soldiers, sailors and diplomatists. The result was disaster."

## CHAPTER VI

### *Gallipoli—and Resignation*

IN Winston's hour of adversity—and it bore upon him so hard that he struck his friends like a lost soul—two personal tributes were paid him that were the more acceptable because they were unexpected.

The first was a declaration from Sir Arthur Wilson, declining to serve as First Sea Lord under any other First Lord but Churchill. Sir Arthur made his views known in a letter to the Prime Minister and Winston was profoundly moved on learning of this expert and impartial testimony to the work he had accomplished. It made no difference to the result, but it provided balm for a lacerated mind.

The second act of solace was a visit of state paid to the First Lord by the Secretary for War. Kitchener and Churchill had not always been in agreement and the Field-Marshal had often been the object of Winston's criticism. But he came now to express his sympathy and good wishes for the future. The final word of leave-taking was a tribute that Winston will never forget—"Well, there is one thing at any rate they cannot take from you—the Fleet was ready."

<sup>1</sup> Letter quoted in the official biography—*Arthur James Balfour*, by Blanche Dugdale, Vol. II, 184.

Lord Riddell, calling at the Admiralty, found a worn-out and harassed Winston, dejected and disconsolate. "I am," he said, "the victim of a political intrigue. I am finished."

"Not finished at forty," objected Riddell, "with your remarkable powers."

"Yes," he said, "finished in respect of all I care for—the waging of the war, the defeat of the Germans."

Winston went on to talk of his future. "I have had a high position offered to me," he confided, "a position which has been occupied by many distinguished men. But that all goes for nothing. This"—with a wave of the arm to indicate his room, with the charts on the walls, so plainly betokening the war—"this is what I live for."

To his visitor he gave a copy of the statement he had prepared defending his administration. He admitted with regret that the foreign situation did not permit him to make use of this *apologia* to silence his traducers.

They talked of the conduct of the war in general. Riddell sought Winston's opinion of Asquith. "Do you think," he asked, "the Prime Minister has been weak?"

To this Winston replied : "Terribly weak—supinely weak. His weakness will be the death of him."

It was a hard judgment but events were to prove its justness. Asquith was weak in not making a stouter defence of his First Lord. By sacrificing him to the Tory lions he lost, in the hour of his own need, the support of a loyal colleague and friend, whose aid might have averted his own fall.

At that very time Asquith was providing another illustration of his weakness, sacrificing yet an older friend, Haldane, the Lord Chancellor. Haldane was hated by the Tories only a whit less intensely than Winston. He was called 'pro-German' because of his sympathy with the German philosophers and his remark "my spiritual home is Germany." With Edward Grey he was Asquith's oldest political associate. Now, under Conservative pressure, Asquith let him go—without a word of regret, an interview or a letter. It was, I suppose, a sign of grace that he could not face a meeting with the friend he was deserting.

It is not without reason that the cynic hath said there is no honour in politics and at the top there are no friendships.

Other Liberals had to pass from office to make way for the Conservative participants in the Coalition. It may be noted in passing that John (now Lord) Simon was one who retained his place. He might then have succeeded to the woolsack, but the ambitious lawyer would not place the obstacle of a peerage between himself and the greater prize he hoped one day might be his. For another quarter of a century he suffered the whips and arrows of politics,

but the prize eluded him and in the second war he has accepted under Winston the Lord Chancellorship he refused in the first.

Winston himself, though reduced in rank, survived in office. Lloyd George, more loyal than Asquith, put up a fight for his friend, tried to instal him at the India Office, tried to get him sent to India as Viceroy. But Lloyd George could not induce Asquith to stand up to the Tories, so that when Winston next took his seat on the Treasury Bench, he was holding the office of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, a post without special duties attaching to it. The holder is thus free to concentrate on some special task. His task was Gallipoli.

At the Admiralty he had been succeeded by his old leader, A. J. Balfour, whose appointment he had recommended when he realized that his own departure was inevitable. The choice, as it proved, was not of the best, for Balfour's subtle mind did not find its best scope in the administration of the Navy. But Winston preferred that it should be Balfour as they had seen eye to eye on naval questions. Now they were to work together on Gallipoli.

In the War Council—renamed the Dardanelles Committee—the new members were Lansdowne, Curzon, and Bonar Law. Balfour, although a Conservative, had been a member of the War Council (but not previously of the Government) since before the war. For the benefit of the new men, the pros and cons of the best course at Gallipoli had to be re-stated—and re-argued.

I must now briefly indicate the course events had taken. It must be borne in mind that the Gallipoli offensive was launched before the political crises chronicled in the last chapters, and it is for the purposes of clarity that I have refrained from confusing the issues of the Dardanelles and the Churchill-Fisher dispute with the history of the Gallipoli operations, although the earlier stages of Gallipoli were contemporaneous with the events already narrated.

The Navy's operations at the Dardanelles were Winston's special responsibility. The Army's attack at Gallipoli was not Winston's concern, but Kitchener's. Winston gave it the powerful aid of his advocacy. His belief was intense and unwavering in the ability to achieve success and in the vast benefits which success would produce.

On one important issue Winston was critical of the Secretary for War and that was of the manner in which Kitchener had produced troops after his initial, uncompromising refusal to do so. First he had said no men at all, then some men, and later more men. The decision to let the Navy, single-handed, attempt to force the Dardanelles was only taken because, as Kitchener stated, no troops could be found. Winston, Fisher, and all the other experts were agreed that joint naval and military operations offered a greater chance of success. To permit the Navy to undertake operations alone in the

first place and thus give the enemy a warning to get his defences in order, was unsurpassable folly if, eventually, troops were going to be despatched.

Winston after the event could only make his protest and tell the War Council that had he known an army of 80,000 to 100,000 men would be ultimately available for the attack, then the assault by the Navy single-handed would never have been ordered.

Kitchener's declaration against the despatch of troops was made in January in the light of the situation on the Western front, where a German onslaught was then believed imminent. By mid-February anxiety at G.H.Q. in France had been somewhat relieved and the 29th Division became free for employment somewhere in the Near East. Salonika, rather than Gallipoli, was the contemplated sphere of action, Salonika being favoured by Lloyd George.

On 16 February the War Council decided to send the 29th Division to Lemnos to be ready for use as occasion might require. There was no definite determination to use it against the Turks—but it was from this decision to send the Division across the Mediterranean that the enterprise against the Gallipoli peninsula sprang.

Transports were collected for the conveyance of the Division to the East, but at the last moment Kitchener changed his mind and countermanded the orders. The news from G.H.Q. in France was not so good. The Division could not go.

Again the French barometer rose. The Division might after all sail. But by now the transports had been dispersed. There was further delay until they had been reassembled.

These decisions and counter-decisions by the Secretary for War occasioned a series of anxious discussions by the War Council in February. It was during the course of them that Kitchener delivered himself of the statement that if the Fleet, unaided, could not get through the Straits, then the Army ought to see the business through. British prestige would be at stake. The effect of a defeat would be very serious. With this view Grey concurred; failure at the Dardanelles would be equivalent to a great defeat on land.

Though of this opinion, Kitchener neglected to take the essential first steps to prepare for immediate action should the necessity arise. One obvious preliminary was the drawing up of a plan of operations and of landing. No such plan had been worked out at the War Office. Even such an elementary precaution as the securing of maps was neglected.

On 12 March Sir Ian Hamilton was appointed to command the Mediterranean expeditionary force. He left London to take up his Command with the utmost haste on March 13. The only information which he was able to obtain before leaving consisted of the official handbooks, the outline of a plan which had been worked out by the Greek General Staff for an attack on the Dardan-

elles, and a statement by Lord Kitchener that the Kilid Bahr plateau had been entrenched and would be sufficiently held by the Turks, and that south of Achi Baba the point of the Peninsula would be so swept by the guns of the Fleet that no enemy positions would be encountered in that quarter. This last statement was made on the authority of a map which afterwards proved inaccurate, and of little use. No really good maps were available until some were taken from Turkish prisoners.

It was bad staff work—no staff work at all. And the general lack of direction was to be seen in the haphazard manner of the embarkation of troops and stores.

When the transports for the 29th Division arrived at Avonmouth, it was found that some of them had already been partially loaded at another port with fodder for horses, and it was accordingly impossible to stow on them all the vehicles forming the first line transport for the units on board. This transport was therefore sent in three freight ships which had been told off to take the Mechanical Transport belonging to the Division. These ships arrived ten days later than the transports. In addition to this some of the ships were not well or conveniently stowed.

Nor were the units of the Royal Naval Division embarked complete, the personnel being placed in one ship, the transport in another, and the horses in another. Stores were not properly packed as they did not arrive until a few hours before the vessels sailed.

Proposals were made to re-stow at Malta the transports which were bringing out the 29th Division, but the accommodation in the harbour did not permit of this. The transports were, therefore, sent to Alexandria, and further delay was caused by the fact that they had to await the arrival of the slower ships which had essential things on board. A great deal of transport which was quite useless for the actual expedition was taken—a much larger number of horses than was necessary, and all the mechanical transport required according to the ordinary war establishments. The Quartermaster-General's department at the War Office pointed out that the mechanical transport would not be needed, but it was sent by the direct order of the Secretary for War. When the objects of the expedition became more clearly defined this was discontinued.

Had the transports been packed in order of battle, the men could have gone into action within a few days of their arrival, and at that date the Turks had not sent large reinforcements to the peninsula. By the time the ships had reloaded at Alexandria, the Turkish reinforcements were in position.

For these matters no responsibility attached to Churchill, who throughout this period (February, March and April) was concerned with the Navy's undertaking at the Dardanelles. He had, however,

noted some of the omissions at the War Office and became increasingly anxious lest some breakdown should occur.

He was determined "not to be involved in responsibility for actions far more momentous than any which the Admiralty was taking, but over which I had absolutely no control." He arranged therefore to have an interview with Kitchener in the presence of the Prime Minister.

This took place early in March and he put the question formally and in plain terms to Kitchener : Did he assume responsibility for any military operations that might arise and in particular for the measure of the forces to achieve success ?

Kitchener replied that he did assume such responsibility.

On this assurance the Admiralty transferred the Royal Naval Division to his command.

When the naval attacks at the Dardanelles were halted, the operations against Gallipoli developed. Ian Hamilton launched his offensive on April 25 and the landing of the force of 29,000 men was successfully accomplished. Heavy casualties were, however, suffered, and by 9 May it was apparent that nothing could be achieved unless reinforcements were sent.

When the War Council met after the change of Government, the first matter for decision was the future of the operations at Gallipoli. Should we cut our losses and withdraw, or should reinforcements be sent to Ian Hamilton and a new assault ordered ? Kitchener pronounced for going on, in no uncertain language. He would not, he said, remain in his office, responsible for the conduct of the war, if it were decided to abandon the Gallipoli venture.

It was accordingly decided to despatch reinforcements—no fewer than three divisions, thus contemplating action on a far larger scale than hitherto. The Council also resolved to reinforce with various naval units the Fleet under de Robeck. These were slightly stronger than was proposed by Winston in his minute of 14 May which caused the flurry of Fisher's resignation.

Ian Hamilton had appealed for further aid on 17 May ; it was not until 9 June that the Cabinet agreed to send the men. The delay caused by the change in the Ministry was of fateful consequence. The attack was renewed, but again Ian Hamilton's resources were inadequate. Reinforcements were always too small and too late. As Winston regretfully phrased it : "A week lost was about the same as a division. Three Divisions could have occupied Gallipoli in February with little fighting ; seven were insufficient in April, but nine might just have done it ; eleven might have sufficed in July ; fourteen were to prove insufficient in August."

Throughout summer and autumn, Winston strove to impart a spirit of resolution to the War Council in its conduct of the Gallipoli

enterprise. By autumn Gallipoli was almost past striving for. A new General was sent out to replace Ian Hamilton, and with a cursory examination of the situation he pronounced for evacuation. Kitchener fulminated in protest and went East himself to investigate. After some further delays—the War Council of 1915 could achieve nothing without delay—it was definitely decided to withdraw. Gallipoli ended with the melancholy success of a brilliantly executed evacuation.

For Winston the months he spent in 1915 as Chancellor of the Duchy were months of frustration and growing despair. He had full knowledge of events and little power to influence them. He had to watch others half-heartedly pushing measures in which he wholeheartedly believed. He was for ever mortified by the sight of great opportunities cast away.

From the strenuous labours of the Admiralty he passed suddenly to the comparative idleness of his sinecure office. He took to painting as a solace and with brush and palette found some partial means of relieving the tedium of the days, of providing an outlet for his superabundant vitality. A few experiments with a child's box of colours in the country one Sunday gave him the idea. A full set of colours, easel and canvas soon followed.

With the evacuation of Gallipoli, the fall of the final curtain on the scene of his greatest hopes, he could no longer tolerate his subordinate role in the Cabinet. His thoughts turned to the field of battle. The trenches called. He demanded a command in the field and resigned office.

On 15 November he took his seat in the House of Commons on the bench behind Ministers. For the first time for ten years he rose to speak as a private member free from the responsibilities and restraints of office. He was free at last to answer his critics—at any rate partially free, for overriding national necessities prevented him from making a full disclosure, at the height of the war, of all the facts of his administration.

He was able, however, to present an impressive case. His speech was not well received at the time. That was, I think, because it was so complete an answer to the critics. Opinion had been unfavourably disposed towards him. He had been the victim of a sustained whispering campaign and the whispering campaigns of Whitehall omit nothing that virulence can suggest and venom can invent. The cruel slanders had created such a mass of prejudice that the very effectiveness of the reply militated against acceptance. Men who suspected the worst could not be persuaded that on all the counts Winston was in the right and his critics wrong. Reading the speech, in the light of the complete knowledge of the facts that has since become available, it is possible to appreciate the completeness of his answer.

Winston dealt briefly at the beginning of his speech with the actions at Coronel and the Falkland Islands, and with the loss of the three Bacchante cruisers. He emphasized that in neither case did he as First Lord overrule the advice of his naval experts. In fact the official papers, when they were published—and he faced their publication with confidence—would show that the political head of the Admiralty had been in full agreement with his professional advisers.

He then turned to the attempt to relieve Antwerp, and described in detail what transpired at the midnight conference on 2 October between Kitchener, Grey, the Foreign Secretary, the First Sea Lord, Prince Louis of Battenberg, and himself, when the decision of the Belgian Government practically to abandon the defence of the city was discussed, and he agreed to go to Antwerp at once and see what he could do to prolong the defence. He crossed the Channel that night.

Next day, having consulted with the Belgian Government and with the British Staff officers who were in Antwerp watching the progress of operations, he made the following telegraphic proposal :

"The Belgians were to continue their resistance to the utmost limit of their power. The British and French Governments were to say within three days definitely whether they could send a relieving force or not, and what the dimensions of that force would be. In the event of their not being able to send a relieving force, the British Government were to send, in any case, to Ghent and to other points on the line of retreat, British troops sufficient to ensure the safe retirement of the Belgian Field Army, so that that Army would not be compromised through continuing resistance on the Antwerp fortress line. Incidentally we were to aid and encourage the defence of Antwerp by the sending of naval guns and Naval Brigades, and by other minor measures."

This proposal was accepted by both Governments and Churchill was told to do what he could to maintain the defence pending the arrival of the relieving force. This he did "without regard to consequences in any direction," and history endorses the view he expressed in his resignation speech, when he said :

"I believe that military history will hold that the consequences conduced extremely to the advantage of the Allies in the West. The great battle which began on the Aisne was spreading day by day more and more towards the sea, and everything was in flux. Sir John French's Army was coming into line, and beginning the operations of the battle of Armentières, which developed into the great battle of Ypres, and everything was in flux. The prolongation

of the resistance of Antwerp, even by only two or three days, detained the German forces in the vicinity of the forts.

"The sudden and audacious arrival of a fresh British Division, and a British Cavalry Division at Ghent and elsewhere, baffled the cautious German staff, and led them to apprehend that a large Army was arriving from the sea. At any rate, their advance proceeded in a halting manner, although opposed by weak forces ; and I believe it will be demonstrated in history—and certainly it is the opinion of many highly competent military officers at the present time—that the whole of this enterprise and moving of those British troops, and the French troops who were in association with them, although it did not save Antwerp, had the effect of causing the great battle to be fought on the line of the Yser, instead of 20 or 30 miles further south. If that is so, the losses which were incurred by our Naval Division, not very heavy in life, will certainly have been well expended in the general interest.

"Of course, it is true that these operations were begun too late. But that is not my fault. On 6 September, nearly a month before, I drew the attention of the Prime Minister, the Secretary for War, and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the dangerous situation which was developing at Antwerp, and to the grave consequences to the Admiralty interests which would be entailed in the loss of that fortress. I suggested that a Territorial Division should be sent to stimulate the defence, and made other proposals of which I will say that the difficulty of adopting them was certainly not less than the need to adopt them. But no action was taken upon that, and the situation of 2 October supervened, as I have described.

"That is all I wish to say on this point, except in regard to the Naval Brigade. The decision to send the Naval Brigade was actually taken over here by the Government, at my desire ; but the decision was actually taken here. I had no authority from Antwerp, where I was, but the quality of these brigades was known only to me. If there is any blame for putting troops of that character into a business of this kind, that blame falls on me, and on me alone. Let us see whether there was any blame.

"The situation was desperate, and the need bitter. I knew that Lord Kitchener would not send a Territorial Division. I knew it would be wrong to lock up a Regular Division in a mere fortress line. These were the only men who were available. They were the nearest. They were at Deal ; they had a few hours' march into Dover, where the transports were lying. They were the only ones that could get there in time.

"It is quite true that the Naval Division was only made up out of what the Navy could spare and leave behind after the mobilization took place. They had good non-commissioned officers, and a sprinkling of trained professional officers, and they had rifles, and

plenty of ammunition. They had been together for a couple of months or six weeks. They had acquitted themselves elsewhere on terms which would not do any discredit to the finest troops of the Regular Army. They were undoubtedly unfit to manœuvre in the field, but that was not what they were for. They were going into trenches alongside of exhausted Belgian troops and townsfolk, who had received far less training than they had, and who were far less well equipped.

"Under all the circumstances they were, I may mention, in exactly the same position as the Division of Fusiliers and Marines who were sent by the French at the same time, and fought in a most gallant manner in all these operations. Therefore, I say, there being nothing else in view, I was justified in proposing to the Government to use those troops, in spite of their want of training. Of course, all these matters can only be judged fairly in relation to the great emergency in which we stood. That is all I say about Antwerp."

Winston then turned to the Dardanelles enterprise which he described as profoundly, maturely and elaborately considered and framed and supported by expert and technical minds. All at the Admiralty recognized that in a joint amphibious *coup de main* lay the best hope of a successful attack, but Kitchener's verdict that no arms were available invalidated such a plan. At the same time the need for action in the Eastern Mediterranean was constantly pressed on the War Council from many quarters.

"As a result of all those representations and discussions," Winston continued, "I telegraphed on 3 January to Admiral Carden, who was our admiral blockading the Dardanelles, and who had been there since the Turkish declaration of war, and I put to him this specific question—of course these are not the actual words ; it is a paraphrase—'Do you consider the forcing of the Dardanelles by ships alone a practicable operation?' The admiral replied to the effect that the Dardanelles could not be rushed, but could be reduced by a regular and sustained naval bombardment. I put the same question simultaneously to Sir Henry Jackson, the present First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, and I received from him an almost similar answer. The coincidence of opinion between those two officers, both of the highest attainments and so differently circumstanced—one man on the spot, and the other the expert at the Admiralty, who was studying the Eastern theatre with the War Staff—the coincidence of opinion between those two made a profound impression on my mind."

Admiral Carden was asked to formulate his plans and state his requirements, which he did on 11 January. The Admiralty were

in a position to meet the very large requirements which he put forward and his plan was then examined by the Admiralty War Staff.

"Sir Henry Jackson expressed his full concurrence in it, and advised in writing an attack on the outer forts being made as early as possible. Lord Fisher, of course, knew everything that was passing, and he never expressed any opinion against this specific operation, nor indeed against the operations at all at this stage. He was very much impressed with the proposal of the Admiralty War Staff to add the *Queen Elizabeth* to the bombarding Fleet. We had seen—it was fresh in everybody's mind—great fortresses, reputed the strongest in Europe, collapsing, fort by fort, under five or ten shells from 15-inch howitzers ; and here was the *Queen Elizabeth* going through her gunnery at Gibraltar with eight 15-inch guns on the broadside.

"Lord Fisher was also strongly in favour of action in Turkish waters, and wrote to me repeatedly on the subject, especially of a joint operation of the Fleet and Army at the Dardanelles. His scheme involved the co-operation of Powers which were neutral, and of an Army which was not available ; but they all led up to the central points of the forcing of the Dardanelles with old ships of the 'Majestic' and the 'Canopus' class. Sir Arthur Wilson was in favour of attacking the outer forts, but felt that the future progress must depend on the amount of Turkish resistance. I state all these points, not in order to shield myself from responsibility, but to let the House know that the business of the Admiralty had been properly conducted.

"After these preliminary discussions, I brought Admiral Carden's plan before the War Council on the 13th January. This meeting was attended by the principal Members of the Cabinet, by various high military officers, by the First Sea Lord, and by Sir Arthur Wilson. The War Council was immensely impressed with the political advantages of the plan if it could be carried out, and they pressed the Admiralty to find a way to carry it out. No one spoke against the methods proposed. No expert adviser indicated any dissent.

"On the 25th January Lord Fisher gave me a memorandum on naval policy. This memorandum did not question the feasibility of the particular operation which was being studied, but it deprecated reducing our margins in Home waters, or using fighting ships for bombarding purposes except in conjunction with military operations. It was a memorandum directed not only against the Dardanelles operation, but against others which were being very strongly pressed forward at the time. I sent the memorandum to the Prime Minister, with an analysis, which I drew up myself, of the naval margins available at the time. I think on that point I may claim that my view has been vindicated by events, because, not only did Lord Fisher

himself at a later date consent to the naval operation, but the new Board of Admiralty sent to the Eastern Mediterranean all the ships which were then under consideration and a great many more; and, so far from any misadventure occurring in Home waters, it is well known that our position has become all the time increasingly safe.

"On the 19th February the attack on the outer forts began. The first phase of the operations was successful beyond all our hopes. The outer forts were destroyed; the Fleet were able to enter the Straits, and attack the forts at the Narrows. Up to the time that this happened, we had always kept in view the possibility that if this operation, which necessarily depended for its success upon a number of incalculable factors, did not develop as we hoped, and if the obstacles were found to be much greater than had been foreseen, we could convert it into a demonstration, and turn our attention to some other part of the Mediterranean theatre. We had kept in view, and had prepared, an amphibious operation which would serve as an alternative in case we wished to withdraw, so as to safeguard our prestige. But the success which we had achieved at the outer forts produced an electrical effect throughout the Balkans. Its repercussion was evident from the first moment in Italy. We had touched the great strategic nerve centre of the world-war of 1915, of this year's campaign.

"Within a fortnight the Turks were forced to move back to Adrianople, and to develop their defences against Bulgaria. A panic was created in Constantinople. Everyone supposed that the enterprise was going to succeed. Day by day I held Staff meetings at the Admiralty, at which I received the appreciation of the greatest authorities, who were unanimous that the movement was progressing in the most favourable manner—more favourable even than we had anticipated, though we quite recognized that the greatest difficulties were yet to come. It was not now desired by anyone to go back, or to ride off on any alternative operation. The eyes of the whole world were riveted on the Dardanelles. Every interest, military, naval, political, and economic, urged the prosecution of the enterprise."

Winston's speech, having thus put on record in the House the success of the initial operations, now took on a different note.

"Across the prospect of the operations a shadow began to pass at the end of the first week in March. The difficulties of sweeping up the minefields increased, and although great success was obtained by the guns of the ships in silencing the forts, they were not able at that stage to inflict decisive permanent damage. The mobile armament of the enemy began to develop, and to become increasingly annoying. It was, therefore, decided that the gradual advance must be replaced

by more vigorous measures. Admiral Carden was invited to press hard for a decision, and not to be deterred by the inevitable loss.

"The Admiralty telegrams gave to the officer on the spot, and were intended to give to him, the feeling that whatever he felt inclined to do in the direction of vigorous measures he could do with the certainty of being supported. These Admiralty telegrams were the result of close consultation between the First Sea Lord and myself, and, like every other order of importance which has emanated from the Admiralty during my tenure in peace or war, bear the written authority of the First Sea Lord. I wish to make that point quite clear. I may extend it, and say there is no important act of policy, no scheme of fleet distribution, of movements of ships, or of plans of war which have been acted on during my tenure at the Admiralty in which the First Sea Lord has not concurred in writing.

"The Admiral on the spot, Admiral Carden, expressed himself in entire agreement with the spirit of the Admiralty telegrams, and announced his intention to press forward in his attack on lines which had been agreed upon, and with which he said he was in exact accord. The date of the attack was fixed for 17 March, weather permitting.

"On the 16th Admiral Carden was stricken down with illness, and was invalidated by medical authority. On the advice of the First Sea Lord, who fully concurred, I appointed Admiral de Robeck, the second in command, who had been very active in the operations, to succeed him. I thought it indispensable, on the eve of this difficult attack, to find out whether the new Admiral shared the opinions of his predecessors. Admiral de Robeck replied that he was in full agreement with the Admiralty telegrams, which expressed his views entirely. He would attack, he said, on the 18th.

"The House is fully acquainted with what followed. I should like to point out that the total British casualties in this formidable adventure scarcely exceeded 100. The French, it is true, had the misfortune to be unable to save the crew of the *Bouvet*, who perished. We lost two old vessels, of a class of which we had about thirty, and which, if they had not been employed at the Dardanelles, would have been rusting uselessly in our southern ports. Therefore I do not think in making this attack—on which so much depended, and the results of which, if successful, would have been so far-reaching—we risked or lost any vital stake.

"Meanwhile, time was passing. The Army, which earlier in the year we had been told would not be available, was gradually assembling, and Sir Ian Hamilton had arrived with the leading Divisions of his Force. The Admiral, on coming out of the attack on the 18th, determined to renew it at the first opportunity, and telegraphed accordingly. After, however, consultation with the General, it was decided to substitute, for the purely naval opera-

tion, a joint naval and military attack. I regretted this at the time, and I endeavoured to persuade the First Sea Lord to send a telegram ordering a resumption of the naval attack. But we could not reach an agreement, and, in view of the consensus of opinion of the naval and military authorities on the spot, I submitted to the alternative, but I submitted with great anxiety.

"Every day the danger of the German submarines arriving—a danger which we greatly exaggerated in our minds—seemed to become more imminent. Every day the possibility of a renewed German attack on Serbia—I think already it has almost succeeded—seemed to draw nearer. Every day I knew the Turks were digging. I knew they were drawing reinforcements from all parts of their Empire; and I can assure the House that the month which apparently had to be consumed between the cessation of the naval attack on 18 March and the commencement of the military attack on 20 April was one of the least pleasant I ever experienced. I have gone through this story in detail in order to show and to convince the House that the naval attack on the Dardanelles was a naval plan, made by naval authorities on the spot, approved by naval experts in the Admiralty, assented to by the First Sea Lord, and executed on the spot by Admirals who at every stage believed in the operations. I am bound—not only in justice to myself, but in justice to the Fleet, who require to know that the orders sent to them from the Admiralty are those which always carry the highest responsible professional authority—I am bound to make that clear. I will not have it said that this was a civilian plan, foisted by a political amateur upon reluctant officers and experts."

So much for the naval operations. For these Winston willingly, and confidently, accepted responsibility. The military operations were another matter. For these he took no responsibility except by what is implied by his having remained a member of the Government. And he went on :

"The naval attack finished on the evening of 18 March. The military attack did not begin until the 25th of April. If in that period we had known what we now know of the course of the military operations, I cannot conceive that anyone would have hesitated to face the loss of prestige in breaking off the attack on the Dardanelles.

"I do not consider the naval operations, begun as they were, necessarily involved the military operations, begun as they were. That was a separate decision, which did not rest with me or the Admiralty either in principle or in method; but I wish to make it quite clear that I was very glad that the War Office authorities were willing to prosecute the enterprise by military means, and I certainly did my best to induce them to do so, and to support them in doing so.

"There are, however, two observations which I wish to make of a general character upon the military operations. First, the essence of an attack upon the Gallipoli Peninsula was speed and vigour. We could reinforce from the sea more quickly than the Turks could reinforce by land, and we could, therefore, afford to renew our attacks until a decision was obtained. To go slow, on the other hand—to leave long intervals between the attacks, so as to enable the Turks to draw reinforcements from their whole Empire, and to refresh and replace their troops again and again—was a great danger.

"Secondly, on the Gallipoli Peninsula, our Army has stood all the summer within a few miles of a decisive victory. There was no other point on any of the war fronts, extending over hundreds of miles, where an equal advance would have produced an equal, or even a comparable, strategic result. It has been proved in this War that good troops, properly supported by artillery, can make a direct advance of two or three miles in the face of any defence. The advance, for instance, which took Neuve Chapelle, or Loos, or Souchez, if it had been made on the Gallipoli Peninsula would have settled the fate of the Turkish Army on the promontory, would probably have decided the whole operations, might have determined the attitude of the Balkans, might have cut Germany from the East, and might have saved Serbia."

Winston concluded his speech with a word on the general situation, and I take the liberty of quoting them as a striking example of his continuity of thought and outlook through the years. This passage, spoken in the middle of November, 1915, is as applicable to-day to the present war as it was then.

"There is no reason to be discouraged about the progress of the War. We are passing through a bad time now, and it will probably be worse before it is better, but that it will be better, if we only endure and persevere, I have no doubt whatever. Sir, the old wars were decided by their episodes rather than by their tendencies. In this War the tendencies are far more important than the episodes. Without winning any sensational victories, we may win this War. We may win it even during a continuance of extremely disappointing and vexatious events.

"It is not necessary for us to win the War to push the German lines back over all the territory they have absorbed, or to pierce them. While the German lines extend far beyond their frontiers, while their flag flies over conquered capitals and subjugated provinces, while all the appearances of military successes attend their arms, Germany may be defeated more fatally in the second or third year of the War than if the Allied Armies had entered Berlin in the first."

The record of history has endorsed the case that Winston Churchill placed before the House in his resignation speech on that November afternoon.

When he sat down Asquith rose and paid what appeared to be a graceful tribute to the 'brilliant colleague' whose services he was losing. It looked so fair—the Asquithian phrase, the Asquithian manner, the perfect expression for the Parliamentary occasion. Examining its terms, however, in the light of our knowledge of affairs—knowledge that was hidden from the majority of the members he was addressing—Asquith's speech appears to be more noteworthy for its omissions, despite its tribute to 'brilliant colleague' and 'faithful friend.' The speech consisted of only three hundred words and I ask you to consider them :

"There is no question before the House, and it would be entirely out of order for me to deal with any of the topics which have been so ably and eloquently dealt with in the very moving speech to which we have just listened from my right hon. Friend. The House is always accustomed, and properly accustomed, to give great latitude, and even to expect great latitude, to explanations from a Minister of the Crown who has resigned his office, and my right hon. Friend has taken advantage of that privilege in a manner which, I think, will be generally appreciated and admired. I only wish to say two things. I think my right hon. Friend has dealt with a very delicate situation not only with ability and eloquence, but also with loyalty and discretion. He has said one or two things which I tell him frankly I had rather he had not said, but, on the other hand, he has necessarily and naturally left unsaid some things which, when the complete estimate of all these transactions has to be taken, will have to be said. But that does not affect his personal position at all, and I desire to say to him and of him, having been associated with him now for ten years in close and daily intimacy, in positions of great responsibility and in situations varied and of extreme difficulty and delicacy, I have always found him a wise counsellor, a brilliant colleague, and a faithful friend. I am certain, sir, he takes with him to the new duties which he is going to assume, having with great consistency abdicated those he has hitherto discharged, the universal good will, hopes, and confident expectations of this House and of all his colleagues."

Is that the speech that Asquith ought to have made on the occasion of the resignation of his 'faithful friend'? Was it the speech of a man faithful to his friend? Supposing that the roles had been reversed. Would Churchill, had he played Asquith's part, have let Asquith go with a specious tribute to brilliance and loyalty? For every decision taken over the Dardanelles—and it

applies also to Gallipoli—Asquith was responsible even as Churchill was responsible, in fact with the greater responsibility of the Prime Minister. He had Churchill's knowledge, he knew of Fisher's objections. His biographers explicitly state :<sup>1</sup> "Asquith too was captured by the idea [of the Dardanelles and Gallipoli] and he never for a moment threw back any of his responsibility on to Mr. Churchill. Whenever the curtain is lifted he is seen urging both military and naval authorities to persevere and begging them to consider and consider again whether more effort could not be made and more troops spared."

Even that admission brings its challenge. "Did not throw back any of the responsibility"—by explicit word perhaps not, but not by implication? Where in that tribute to his 'faithful friend' is there any admission of his own liability? Why did he not frankly and boldly say—"Churchill's responsibility is my responsibility : if he was wrong then I was wrong : but I claim that I was right and he was right too?"

You can imagine the speech that Churchill, the Prime Minister, would have made on such an occasion. Look at his speeches on the evacuations of Greece and of Crete. He did not throw a colleague to the lions and pay the mockery of a tribute to a 'faithful friend.'

It is fitting here to record what followed, for though the incident belongs to the sequence of events chronicled in the next chapter, it provides the best comment on the sincerity of that Asquithian tribute. I quote once again from Lord Beaverbrook's reminiscences.<sup>2</sup>

"Churchill went to France and was offered by French, who was then nearly at his last gasp as Commander-in-Chief, an A.D.C.'s post at G.H.Q., or, in the alternative, a Brigade. Churchill chose the Brigade, but insisted on first obtaining some practical experience of trench warfare. For this purpose he served a month with the Grenadier Guards. After that Churchill was actually given a brigade in Bridges' Division. But the very day after this was apparently settled French happened to go home to London and told Asquith what he was doing. The Premier was apparently frightened and urged French, who was in no position to insist on having his way, to give Churchill no more than a Battalion.

"This really was rough. A Premier may have to throw a colleague overboard sometimes to save the ship, but surely he should not jerk from under him the hen-coop on which the victim is trying to sustain himself on the stormy ocean."

Even an ageing politician perplexed by the problems of the war that beset him, might have shown greater respect than that for the claims of faithful friendship.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Lord Oxford and Asquith*. J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, Vol. II, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Politicians and the War*. Vol. II, p. 74.

## CHAPTER VII

*Malbrouk*

FIFTEEN years had passed since Winston had been a' soldiering. During those years he had devoted himself to the career of politics and the service of the State. Now for a space he divested himself of his political mantle and donned uniform again, and to soldiering he gave himself up with the zest of his ardent nature. He got ready for the trenches inspired by a determination to gain new laurels in a military career now that politics seemed closed to him.

From the pen of a friend we gain a glimpse of him on the eve of his departure. The household was upside down as he completed his preparations. Downstairs his faithful secretary, Eddie (later Sir Edward) Marsh, was in tears, upstairs Lady Randolph was in despair at the thought of her brilliant son leaving for the trenches, their discomforts and their danger. Mrs. Churchill alone remained calm.

Arrived in France, Winston went to the headquarters of Sir John French, then nearing the end of his service as Commander-in-Chief of the B.E.F. Commander-in-Chief and ex-First Lord met as old friends. "What would you like to do?" asked Sir John, to which Winston replied that he left the matter to French's decision. The command of a brigade was offered, at which Winston suggested that he would like a month's experience in the line to qualify for the command. He chose the Guards as the best school and so it was agreed.

A few days later Major Churchill reported at headquarters of a Grenadier battalion.

It was a dull November afternoon. The weather cold. A drizzle was falling. The battalion was taking over in the line. Winston and the Colonel followed in the rear of the troops. For half an hour neither spoke. Only the distant sound of the guns broke the stillness of that sombre afternoon. Then the Colonel observed: "I think I ought to tell you that we were not consulted at all on the matter of your coming to join us." It was a chilling welcome.

For some days the weather remained cold and so did the Colonel. Churchill was amused at the pains that were taken to impress him that his previous eminence counted for nothing with the Grenadiers. He was in no way disconcerted and when the battalion went out of the line for a rest period, there was a distinct thawing of the atmosphere. A little later and he was able to report that personal prejudice had been overcome and he was accepted as a regular

officer. When the Second-in-Command went on leave, the Colonel invited him to take over the duties. Winston was as pleased as a boy who is given his cap in the school XV. He regarded it as one of the greatest honours ever done him. At the end of his period of instruction, Winston secured an impressive report from his Colonel testifying that he had gained exceptional knowledge of trench warfare in all its forms and was fully competent for a command. So Winston went back to French's G.H.Q. to claim the promised brigade, only to be disappointed because of the ban imposed by Asquith, as recorded in the previous chapter. It was at this time that French was recalled and Haig was appointed to the succession. Winston was not on the same terms of friendship with the new Commander-in-Chief and as a brigade was no longer offered to him, he had, perforce, to accept a battalion. Never was he so disappointed and hurt as over the withdrawal of the offered brigade. His actual command had been nominated and he had spent his spare time evolving his plans, devising in his fertile brain new methods for encompassing the downfall of the Hun. His mortification was extreme, but it was forgotten when he took over the battalion that was given him—the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers.

It was not a crack battalion, but Winston, now promoted Lieutenant-Colonel, was as proud as if he had succeeded to the command of the Old Guard itself.

With characteristic thoroughness and efficiency he announced his intention of making the unit "the smartest in the army", and here his experience in previous campaigns stood him in good stead. He was at pains to establish close personal relations with both officers and men, and his concern for cookhouse and sanitary squad efficiency impressed them as much as his demand for a high standard of rifle drill and musketry.

From the moment that the battalion took over trenches at Ploegsteert, near Hazebrouck, his popularity among the men steadily increased. He was continually among them both by day and by night, frequently stopping on rounds of inspection to share the vigil of the sentry or to discuss the situation—and a whole host of other things besides—with the platoon sergeant. Through such personal contacts he enjoyed the fullest confidence of the rank and file who keenly appreciated the concern he displayed for their welfare.

An incessant craving for action ordained that he must relieve the tedium of life in the trenches by private 'wars' on the Germans opposite, usually initiated at night. He would order his men to put up bursts of rifle and machine-gun fire until the enemy in alarm replied. Then he would telephone to the artillery demanding support, and more than once the nocturnal 'hate' of the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers led to a general flare up in the sector.

Adjacent units who preferred quiet nights did not hold Colonel Churchill and his men in high favour. There is no doubt that he was one of the comparatively few men who thoroughly enjoyed active hostilities. His whole attitude to the serious business of war in the trenches found expression in the exclamation, "This is great, isn't it?" with which on one occasion he sought to dispel the nervousness of some young recruits during one of his private strafes.

While his concern for the safety of his men was most marked, his own disregard of danger was often a source of embarrassment to those close to him. He was no stranger to 'Plugstreet's' daily peril from enemy shells.

One day, working on a highly confidential memorandum on the employment of the tank, he was seated before the window at his 'Rest' headquarters, a convent building only a thousand yards from the enemy, when a bombardment began. Shells began to fall closer and closer. After a 4·2 had burst less than fifty yards away he decided that greater protection was needed than a glass window could afford. He left his office at a pace that he termed "dignified yet decided." The protection of the cellars he despised and he put a couple of walls between himself and the enemy gunners by entering the battalion office in the adjoining building.

After an hour or so the blitz died away and the Colonel left his refuge for his headquarters. He found that the room in which he had been working was wrecked and shattered. A 30-lb. shell had struck the convent and after smashing through the office had crashed through the brickwork of the cellar and fallen, unexploded, on the floor. Providence watched over Colonel Churchill on that occasion.

While in the trenches he maintained his political contacts. Many distinguished visitors made their way to Plugstreet, among them Lord Birkenhead, still 'F. E.' at that time but with the added dignity of a knighthood and the office of His Majesty's Attorney-General.

It was while visiting the Colonel that 'F. E.' suffered the indignity of arrest for being at large in France without a permit. The Attorney-General's discomfiture was received with delight by his friends, and the incident lost nothing in re-telling. It seems fitting to give the correct facts of the affair as stated by Sir Nevile Macready, who was himself concerned as Adjutant-General. Sir Nevile wrote :<sup>1</sup>

"Late in January, 1916, some Cabinet Ministers attended a conference in Paris, and applications came through for passes for certain of them to visit St. Omer from Boulogne. On the morning

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of an Active Life*, by Sir Nevil Macready.

of the 30th January information was received that Sir F. E. Smith, the Attorney-General, a member of the Cabinet, intended to come through to visit Lieut.-Col. Winston Churchill, then commanding a battalion in the 2nd Corps in the trenches near Ploegsteert Wood. No pass had been applied for by the gentleman, and therefore the Provost-Marshal automatically warned all road posts to look out for an individual without a pass. Whether the information reached the Provost-Marshal too late, or whether one of the posts neglected their duty is not known, but it was discovered that Sir F. E. Smith, who was dressed in uniform, obtained a car without authority from the Mechanical Transport Depot at St. Omer, and went on to the 2nd Corps. When this was known late in the afternoon word was sent by telephone to the 2nd Army to arrange for his return to G.H.Q.

"At 10 p.m. Sir Frederick was discovered in Lieut.-Col. Winston Churchill's dug-out, and was conducted to G.H.Q. by the Assistant Provost-Marshal of the 2nd Corps, not arriving, however, until 4 a.m., owing to an unfortunate breakdown of the car. An officer of the Provost branch at G.H.Q. who had arranged accommodation for Sir Frederick at the local inn was waiting for his arrival, and at the inn asked for his assurance that he would not disturb the Commander-in-Chief, or the Cabinet Ministers then in St. Omer, until he had seen the Adjutant-General in the morning. There was some little difficulty over this, which, however, was overcome, and at 9 a.m. the next morning I saw Sir Frederick. He was annoyed, perhaps naturally, that he had been technically 'arrested,' a step that was not intended, the original order from G.H.Q. being that he should be escorted back to G.H.Q.

"It was, I think, the fear of ridicule more than anything else that disturbed the equilibrium of the Attorney-General, but, as I pointed out to him, the Commander-in-Chief's order in regard to passes had evidently not been unwittingly evaded, because the other members of his party had arranged for the necessary permits, and further, in view of the fact that he himself had been on the Staff of the Indian Corps earlier in the war, it was a matter of greater surprise that he should have placed himself in such a position. In addition, I explained that had an application been made for him to visit Lieut.-Col. Winston Churchill, I should have been glad to arrange it with the 2nd Army.

"Col. Repington's statement<sup>1</sup> that Sir Frederick had called on me before going out to the front is not a fact, while the so-called 'apology' mentioned by him was merely an explanation that the actual 'arrest' had been the result of a telephonic error, and was written by the direction of the Commander-in-Chief, at the sugges-

<sup>1</sup> Col. Repington was the author of a war-time diary that gained some notoriety from the chit-chat it contained about those in high places.

tion, I gathered, of Mr. Bonar Law, who, as ever, was ready to pour oil on troubled waters.

"Personally, I was sorry the incident should have occurred to anyone in a public position, but none the less it was a satisfaction to know that throughout the Army orders would be enforced without regard to persons or position, and I hope this may continue to be the case in our Army in future wars.

"In the years to come, when I was often in touch with Sir Frederick Smith, I never perceived the least trace of any remembrance of the incident, and with regret read its resurrection in Col. Repington's book in a garbled and imaginative form, which might lead to an impression that obedience to orders issued by a Commander-in-Chief in the field was dependent on the status of an individual.

"On the afternoon of the day of this interview Lieut.-Col. Winston Churchill came in to see me, and in the course of a friendly chat expressed the hope that in dealing with the case I had not been influenced by the remembrance that at one time Sir Frederick Smith had galloped for Sir Edward Carson. I assured him that the idea had never entered my mind, Ulster and its affairs having long ago been washed off the tablets of my brain. The suggestion struck me as indicating that Winston had not altogether lost the politician's way of looking at things when he reassumed his uniform."

Churchill was indignant over the treatment 'F.E.' had received. He got in touch with politicians at the Front and sent the following letter to Bonar Law :

PLOEGSTEERT,  
January, 1916.

MY DEAR BONAR,

The arrest of F. E. in the present circumstances seems to me to be a very serious event. I received him here in virtue of a telegram from the A.D.C. to the C. in C. transmitted to me through the H.Q. of the IXth Division in which I am serving. Of this I enclose a copy. The act of placing the Cabinet Minister charged with the ultimate appeal in all Court Martial cases in arrest and removing him in conditions of indignity is one which cannot and will not end here in France. It will become public knowledge and will draw with it many other things. I am of course resolved to take any steps which the law allows. And I rely upon you to give the subject your most earnest and immediate attention as his colleague and friend. You should show this to Lloyd George.

Yours very sincerely,  
WINSTON S. C.

Bonar Law lost no time in interviewing Haig and was just in time to stop His Majesty's Attorney from the further indignity of being sent under escort to Boulogne and deported for having no pass.

Haig sent his private secretary with an invitation to lunch at Headquarters where the incident was brought to a close in a manner befitting the occasion.

Churchill's months of service in the trenches form the least-known period, though not the least eventful, of his career. Happily, they did not pass totally unrecorded. While searching for information I was fortunate enough to come across a small volume, *With Winston Churchill at the Front*, of which the authorship was concealed by the *nom de plume* of 'Captain X.' On inspection it proved to contain a diverting account of the Colonel's service and I am privileged to reproduce the high-lights of it here with the consent of its author who, under a title less romantic than 'Captain X,' instructs the youth of Glasgow in the mysteries of the law as Professor Dewar Gibb. Captain X wrote :

Winston arrived at noon at Battalion H.Q. and in the most businesslike way at once set about knowing his officers. He summoned them all to the orderly-room at 2.30 p.m.

First of all the Company Commanders were called in and were introduced formally by the retiring Colonel. Then the rest of the officers were presented. After each officer had come up and saluted and shaken hands, Winston relapsed into his chair and scrutinized him, silently and intently, from head to foot. It was not easy to know how to parry this unconventional attack on one's composure. It was necessary to stand at attention, of course, so that no relief could be sought in the diversion of a mere social and friendly observation. I found myself forced to stare hard back at him and trust to time to bring this, like all other trials, to an end. So I stared, but I admit the experience was distasteful to me.

That was orderly-room No. 1, which terminated after we had all been "vetted" in this novel fashion, but orderly-room No. 2, held the next day, was all bustle and business.

"War is declared, gentlemen," observed Winston to an audience thoroughly aroused to attention, "on the lice." With these words did the great scion of the house of Marlborough first address his Scottish captains assembled in council. And with these words was inaugurated such a discourse on *pulex Europaeus*, its origin, growth, and nature, its habitat and its importance as a factor in wars ancient and modern, as left one agape with wonder at the erudition and force of its author.

When Winston's masterly biography of the louse was completed, and in order that we might not abandon all hope, he called upon the Doctor, hitherto a silent but not unmoved listener, to suggest remedies and make proposals, and thereafter he created a committee of Company Commanders to concert measures for the utter extermination of all the lice in the battalion. I may here say that

it was done, and done well, after three or four days spent in toil as unsavoury as any I have ever devoted myself to. I remember the Corps Commander passing the billet when we were busy with our hot irons, extruding the lice from trousers and shirts.

From day to day the C.O. introduced particular little innovations which he liked and by the end of ten days he had produced a manifest smartening up on every side. Ritchie indeed sarcastically observed that he had only come "to teach us to click our heels and polish our guns and to turn us into a first-class eye-wash battalion," but that was too sweeping a statement, and it is only just to admit that he improved us greatly. Meantime he improved *on* us. All the Company Commanders were invited to dine in the H.Q. mess and there learnt a little of the charm and courtesy of the man as distinct from the Colonel. No doubt he sought to win us, but for that he is only to be admired, and his capacity for coaxing and charming the best even out of the most boorish is a gift which I never ceased to wonder at. He materially altered the feelings of the officers towards him by this kindness and by the first insight we thus gained into the wonderful genius of the man. And so he began a conquest which when he left us was complete—a complete conquest achieved in two or three short months and over men of a race not easily moved and won over.

The men meanwhile seemed to be delighted with their new Colonel. Obviously each man thought that he himself was the person whom Winston's coming was especially designed to honour. Many of them did not know even his name correctly : he was Lord Churchill, Viscount Churchill, Sir Winston Churchill, even the Duke of Churchill, but whatever his name was, his being there was a feather in their caps. For a week their letters told of nothing else.

On the second day of Winston's tenure of office he gave orders that all the companies should parade in a certain slushy meadow, when he intended personally to inspect the work of each company and meet the officers and men in their official capacity. I had command of our company that day and we were bidden to come forth first and display our prowess. I was given a free hand, so I chose company-drill, which I knew, and which I thought Winston as a cavalryman was as little likely to know as anything. And the company-drill went off to my own entire satisfaction. Then we paused, while the Colonel went along each platoon and spoke to the men. They loved that. They always do love a chance of spreading themselves to one of the "high heid yins" as they call them.

"What is your age?" asked the Colonel, of His Royal Beeriness No. 6 in the rear rank.

"41, sir," was the reply.

"41? An excellent age : it's my own."

He was very nice to them all, and as I have said they responded well, but I didn't like some of the buttons I saw and I had no eye for the humour of the situation ; I felt there was more to come. There was. There was bayonet-drill to come.

"Mr. X., will you put your company through a few bayonet exercises ?"

I parried that and summoned the Company-Sergeant-Major. He played up like a man and had begun to bellow orders at the men before the C.O. saw what had happened.

"No, no, I want *you* to do it," he said then to me. So I took up the tale. As I had never been interested in bayonet fighting and held decidedly unorthodox views on it, I can honestly say I felt most uncomfortable. I summoned up to my aid all the mystic phrases which I had heard in the past and which I imagined might convey something to my willing company, but all the time I felt sure that I should have been better understood by a company of British soldiers in front of Sevastopol in 1854 than here in Flanders in 1916.

"I want you to take a rifle and bayonet yourself and demonstrate, Mr. X., demonstrate."

Officious hands thrust the necessary implements into mine, and I began to indulge in a wild series of warlike gestures. I felt that it all bore no possible resemblance to bayonet exercises as "laid down," but I had to do something, and so I went on lunging and parrying and thrusting, all the while wondering if Winston would have me reduced to the ranks afterwards for such an exhibition of buffoonery. And matters were *not* helped out by the fact that the other companies and their officers were standing around, and at ease, to witness this amusing spectacle, and that I had already heard one hastily stifled cackle from Ramsey, whom I knew to be even more ignorant of the whole subject than I was.

I cannot say that after this I read with much enthusiasm in orders that on the following day the battalion would parade at 9.30 a.m., and that the Company Commanders would be mounted. At all times a C.O.'s parade is an utter abomination, and not one of us could contemplate with calm the prospect of seeing added to the horror of it the spectacle of the four Company Commanders on their "horses." It may be imagined that this would only affect the four wretches principally concerned, but it is not so, for an uncontrolled and fiery infantry charger in a small field together with a great many men armed with rifles forms a source of danger, alarm and panic. Fortunately, our company beast, which I always thought resembled a large trench rat (and which was called "Eagle"), was pretty steady, so I made up my mind to bolt from the *mélée* which I felt sure was inevitable.

The scene of operations was a field about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres in extent

with trees scattered about in it at intervals the least convenient. Underfoot it was wet, it was nowhere level, and in short it was at all points in perfect contrast to what a parade ground ought to be.

The horses were in a remarkable state of calm, which I feared must presage a storm. Nothing and nobody else was in a state of calm. One didn't expect it of the functionary alluded to above, but others, ordinarily more or less stolid, were fussing about, fastening straps here, covering dirty buttons with other straps there, pushing and pulling, dressing up, dressing back and behaving generally in a panic-stricken and utterly unsoldierlike fashion.

Then Sinclair,<sup>1</sup> the Second-in-Command, arrived. The high spirit of his horse communicated itself to the horses of the Company Commanders, unspeakably increasing the misery of those officers. After he had called the battalion to attention he was followed quickly by the C.O., who was at once saluted with the remarkable announcement, "D Company absent, Sir," which might have daunted a lesser man on first assuming command of a battalion.

We stood, and waited and after mistaking the transport, a milk-cart and a gang of red-throated staff for the company, it at last marched on with the piper gaily playing "The Barren Rocks" and Ramsey looking well-fed and happy. Nothing was said then, but Ramsey was later called on for explanations.

Then we presented arms. We presented arms quite a number of times, Winston returning the compliment by touching his hat to us. The ponies, too, did not let the feat of arms pass unnoticed. Foulkes's took him for a short stroll to a muck-pond. Mine fortunately did no more than lost its dressing. Harvey's and Ramsey's turned about and glowered at their companies.

Having done with handling arms, we were put in motion. Now Winston was a cavalryman and his commands might legitimately have been expected to lack all the precision of phrase that is expected of an infantry Colonel. They lacked that, it's true, but that was the least of it. We set off in column of fours and an early fence made it necessary to wheel, which emergency was met by the command :

"Head of the column three-quarters left wheel."

Unhappily the head of the column was at the disposal of poor Foulkes, already too much occupied in curbing the forwardness of his horse to be able to spare a moment for translating such a command into the language of "Infantry Training." Imploringly he turned round, and his horrid beast, encouraged by this, made a straight line for the Colonel in mid-field. Meantime the company was up against the fence and with the resource of men determined, as British soldiers are said always to do, to think for themselves, it started to "mark time in front."

<sup>1</sup> None other than Sir Archibald Sinclair, later His Majesty's Secretary for Air.

At last Foulkes was borne back to them, and having gleaned the Colonel's wishes during his short escapade, he wheeled them to the left and relieved a tense situation. It is rumoured that during this impasse the Colonel turned to Sinclair and whispered, "Shouldn't they gallop, Archie?" This is probably untrue, as it came from MacDavid, still smarting under a rebuke by the C.O. for the unauthorized addition to his uniform of a yellow bandana handkerchief, three-quarters of which flaunted bravely from his left sleeve.

The horses only became unmanageable, when we began to march in column of companies, constantly turning about and wheeling and forming. Sometimes I was beside my company, sometimes in front, sometimes behind. Never, save by accident, was I where I should have been, and the other equestrian performers on the field were in no better case. The companies lurched forward, the subalterns swore, the horses rammed the companies from behind and before, the commands ground out unceasingly, as one or other fence of the wretched enclosure was encountered and the upshot of the whole matter was a *mélée* of blasphemous humanity and outraged horseflesh. It was all rather astonishing to us, for we had come to have a real regard for Winston's sense of propriety and decorum and orderliness in matters of duty.

At last the time drew nigh for our return to the trenches, a prospect at no time exhilarating, but now one calculated to give rise to the greatest uneasiness. I myself recollect some remarks of Winston's when he said :

"We will go easy at first : a little digging and feeling our way, and then perhaps later on we may attempt a deed."

It was just such "deeds" that were becoming unpleasantly popular at this epoch.

On a cold raw day in January the Colonel and the Company Commanders with a few other important officers of the battalion moved out of the billeting area in a motor omnibus, bound for the neighbourhood of Armentières and Plugstreet.

Winston by this time had donned the French helmet which we were all to become so familiar with and was in great fettle.

"Here we are," he said, turning to me, "here we are, torn away from the Senate and the Forum to fight in the battle-fields of France."

"Yes," I replied. I often said merely "yes" on these occasions, as I felt that the time was quite inappropriate for me to enlarge on his observations.

The line we were to take over was being held by the 8th Border Regiment, and we were shown all the beauty spots by them in the most approved fashion. Winston was in his element. Very few of the people seemed to recognize him, but on the way down from the trenches my guide said to me :

"Excuse me, sir, but your commanding officer is very like Mr. Winston Churchill."

I agreed and said that the resemblance had often been remarked. It was the blue tin-hat which prevented people from recognizing him with certainty.

Winston certainly got some work out of his battalion. Early and late he was in the line. On an average he went round three times a day, which was no mean task in itself, as he had plenty of other work to do. At least one of these visits was after dark, usually about 1 a.m. In wet weather he would appear in a complete outfit of waterproof stuff, including trousers, or overalls, and with his French light-blue helmet he presented a remarkable and unusual figure. He was always in the closest touch with every piece of work that was going on, and, while at times his demands were a little extravagant, his kindness and the humour that never failed to flash out made everybody only too keen to get on with the work, whether the ideal he pointed out to them was an unattainable one or not. To see Winston giving a dissertation on the laying of sand-bags, with practical illustrations, was to come inevitably to the conclusion that his life-study had been purely of poliorcketics and the corresponding counter-measures. You felt sure from his grasp of practice that he must have served apprentice to a bricklayer and a master-mason, while his theoretical knowledge rendered you certain that Wren would have been proud to sit at his feet, or even such a master of the subject as Uncle Toby Shandy.

And yet sometimes Winston was wrong about those sand-bags and 2nd Lieut. Stickinthemud was right. In fact while professing a great admiration for the Colonel's zeal and enthusiasm as regards building of parapets and traverses and parados, I must confess that he did not seem to be able to get into touch with the actual practical handling of these accursed sand-sacks. It was a case of the "last infirmity of noble minds."

It was always a matter of especial interest to watch our Colonel in his relationships with his superior officers, those men who while a thousand times smaller in all essentials were yet by the accident of the time in a position to issue orders to him. Such of us as expected to see sparks flying were disappointed. The Colonel's bearing was studiously respectful, but no General whom I ever saw with him was ever rash enough to be very critical or very severe. During his command of the battalion, we had to deal with two Brigade Commanders. The former of these two shall remain nameless. The battalion disliked him and into the Colonel's feelings I was not permitted to see. What was to Winston an occasional cause for stumbling, namely, the setting of too hard a task, was General X's constant failing.

I remember a visit of his on one occasion to Battalion Head-

quarters at Lawrence Farm just after that stronghold had been considerably knocked about by shelling and various protective works destroyed. He sent for the Colonel, who arrived promptly and greeted him in debonair fashion. The General at once opened out about the defective condition of those same protective works.

"Look here, Churchill," he fussed, "this won't do, you know. There's no protection at all here for men. You ought to get something done—build something to make it safe. Men cannot go on living here : look at that sentry there—it's dangerous, you know, it's positively dangerous."

The Colonel was pardonably nettled.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "but, you know, this is a very dangerous war."

And with that let us leave General X.

Going round the line on a beautiful morning about one or two o'clock the Colonel would see perhaps a man or men brought in badly wounded on patrol. This sight brought with it apparently a desire to get some of his own back. I remember well one evening in particular, when we had two men seriously wounded and one killed, Winston's coming into the dug-out in the front-line where my Company Commander was sitting, just returned from leave, and recounting his experiences, exciting and highly discreditable, to an enraptured audience. The blue helmet appeared round the door and we heard a voice say : "Come on, war is declared," and we were bidden all to turn out and superintend the rapid-fire of our half-waking platoons. We found that Winston had arranged for almost all the guns of the Division to support our little alarm, and as soon as the rifle-fire began there was a perfect blaze of artillery behind us and the Hun very soon became alarmed and fired off rockets "of every colour in the summer solstice," as Ramsey put it. Unfortunately he did not confine himself to firing off rockets, but fired off a multitude of whizzbangs and other unpleasant projectiles as well. Just as the enemy field guns began, the Colonel came along to our trench and suggested a view over the parapet. As we stood up on the fire-step we felt the wind and swish of several whizzbangs flying past our heads, which, as it always did, horrified me. Then I heard Winston say in a dreamy, far-away voice : "Do you like War ?"

The only thing to do was to pretend not to hear him. At that moment I profoundly hated war. But at that and every moment I believe Winston Churchill revelled in it. There was no such thing as fear in him.

These little intervals did good in very dull times, but they were not invariably popular. Especially were they unpopular with Gibb, the Adjutant. The position for him was an invidious one. He remained of course at Battalion Headquarers and it was his

pleasant task to keep in touch with the Colonel and the artillery. It was all very well when we were getting support purely from our own covering battery, though even then the battery officers didn't like being asked to fire off their cannon in the middle of the night, merely to get the wind up. But the C.O. was a great friend of General Tudor, who commanded the Divisional artillery, and he did not hesitate therefore to call for more efficient support than could be rendered by a mere 18-pounder battery.

The purely administrative side of his command, what is known as "A" work by the Staff, and the countless and somewhat formal "G" reports, the Colonel left as a rule to the Adjutant. He used, however, to see the companies' reports each morning, usually laconic and unenlightening save when Ramsey broke the monotony by introducing—well, conversational epithets into his "wind" or "operations" reports, which had in consequence to be bowdlerized by the Adjutant, before submission to the C.O. Once, however, in the interests of literary form the Colonel did interfere and issue a manifesto directing that "in company reports a blind shell should be referred to as such and not as a 'dud'."

Not long before we left Plugstreet there was a dinner-party in the line such as cannot have had many parallels during the war. The guests included the Divisional General, the Brigadier-General on the General Staff of the Corps, two very distinguished flying-officers, and the Divisional General's A.D.C.

These people, in addition to the usual members of the Mess, made a pretty tight fit, but all went well and the mess-waiters managed to spill the minimum of soup on the General's lap, and the sulphurous parleyings in the outer darkness between the various functionaries interested were for once conducted in an undertone. But Winston was too good a host to give his guests merely a good dinner and leave it at that. There must be entertainment beyond the merely gastric. And so with his blandest manner he turned to the General and said :

"I'm sure you'd like to see my trenches, General."

"Yes," said the General.

"Very well: you'd like to come, too?" to another General.

"Oh yes, rather," said he, not to be outdone.

"We'll all go up then," said Winston, "it's a lovely night, though very quiet. We might go out in front."

The scene in front I did not witness, but I can imagine it. Winston in his element, pointing out the sights—the warm effect of the Very lights upon the unwonted red and gold—the polite "after you's" of the visitors—the hugging of mother earth and proximity to the cooling swamp—and over all, the savour wafted softly on the breeze from the age-old carcass of the loyal cow, killed in front of Burnt-out Farm.

The battalion was delighted with this performance. I think the invitation to go forth was made in all good faith by the Colonel, but it was a first-rate joke to the jaded infantry to see them all out there tearing breeches and thumbs on the wire ; wallowing in mud and cursing over clothes that had never been grovelled in before.

I am firmly convinced that no more popular officer ever commanded troops. As a soldier he was hard-working, persevering and thorough. The expected fireworks never came off. He was out to work hard at tiresome but indispensable detail and to make his unit efficient in the very highest possible degree. I say nothing of his tactical and strategic ability—these were not tested in our time, but I cannot conceive that exceptionally creative and fertile brain failing in any sphere of human activity to which it was applied. And, moreover, he loved soldiering : it lay very near his heart and I think he could have been a very great soldier. How often have we heard him say by way of encouragement in difficult circumstances, "War is a game to be played with a smiling face." And never was precept more consistently practised than this.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Back to Office*

IN the autumn of 1916 Winston Churchill was back in the House of Commons, his last period of active service completed, his career as politician resumed. His return to Westminster was the result of military as well as political circumstances. First and foremost there was the disappearance of his command. Authority decided that the 6th Royal Scots Fusiliers, under strength, should be amalgamated with another battalion. Winston, as the junior of the two C.O.s concerned, would have to forfeit his command. He would have been able to secure another battalion without much delay, but his displacement coincided with the pressure of his judgment and his friends to return to the political scene.

It had been represented to him by several visitors to Plugstreet that a man of his brain and genius had no right to waste on the command of a tiny province abilities that were needed at home. Tidings of disquiet about the lack of direction in affairs were brought to him. Despite the high value which he placed on his work in the trenches, with its risk and honour, Winston was persuaded that he had not the right to remain. The war situation was grave in the

extreme and the feeling grew strong within him that he had the knowledge and the power to help to mend matters.

His inclination was fortified by appeals in letters he received from home. Edward Carson wrote to him—and Carson at that time was the Government's critic-in-chief; the energies Sir Edward had devoted in the past to Ulster were now concentrated, under the impulse of the highest patriotism, on the task of prodding the Ministry into a state of greater efficiency and resolution. Sir Arthur Markham, another member of the patriotic opposition, added his appeal to Carson's. C. P. Scott, the eminent Liberal who edited the *Manchester Guardian*, was another who wrote to Winston indicating the proper sphere for his activities.

So Malbrouk packed up his kit and returned from the wars, at which we can indulge in a sigh of heartfelt relief. A chance bullet from a German rifle might have changed the course of history when Winston was in Plugstreet.

Once during his period of service he had made a hurried journey to Westminster to take part in a debate. He rose to advise Arthur Balfour, his successor at the Admiralty, to put in hand adequate measures to cope with a renewal of the German U-boat campaign against our merchant shipping. During the speech he startled the House by urging the recall of Fisher. It was a suggestion prompted by the best of intentions, a gesture intended to let the world know that he harboured nothing but good will for the veteran Admiral. As political tactics it was a mistake. It made Fisher's return impossible and it did not improve Winston's own position.

Some time elapsed before Winston was restored to ministerial status. The old prejudices against him still existed, though amongst the Conservative leaders to whom office had brought knowledge of the facts of the Gallipoli situation there was a juster appreciation of his case. Bonar Law, at the time of the resignation speech, had conceded that Winston had the defects of his qualities and that as his qualities were large the shadow they threw was fairly large also.

To this equivocal tribute Bonar Law added: "I entered the Cabinet with, to put it mildly, no prejudice in his favour. I have now been his colleague for five months. I say deliberately that in mental power and vital force he is one of the foremost men in the country." Bonar Law told a friend afterwards that he thought too much blame had been attached to Winston over Gallipoli and that the failure was really due to the inefficiency at the War Office.

When he resumed his parliamentary work, Winston set about the task of clearing his reputation. This could only be done by the revelation of the facts. National interests in wartime provided the Government with the best of reasons against permitting this. Winston's reputation could only be made good by damaging others.

He was entitled to take the view that the fact that the nation was at war was not a valid reason why injustice should be done to individuals.

Winston pressed for the publication of the papers, but Asquith would not consent to this. Winston grew dejected. It was hard that he should have to remain under a stigma which was a bar to office. The war was going badly, he had the conviction that he could do as much as any man to put things right, but he was powerless, his boundless energy denied the scope of employment. "My life," he complained again, "is finished. I am banished from the scene of action."

Lloyd George wanted Winston to succeed him at the Ministry of Munitions. He pressed the Prime Minister to make the appointment. Asquith would not hear of it. Gallipoli—one word to blast a man's fame.

Winston did not disguise his feelings that Asquith had treated him badly. "He has not defended me as he should have done," he told Lord Riddell. "He shared all the responsibility for all that was done. But beyond a general statement that he accepted responsibility—a statement which was calculated to show how magnanimous he is—he never made any case in my favour. When the documents are published my position in the country will be very different. I have demanded publication and the Government have promised that the documents shall be published. But publication is delayed and I am beginning to doubt if the pledge will be kept."

Riddell asked him what he proposed to do.

"Earn my living and go on painting," he replied. "Painting has been a great solace. It helped me to tide over the horrible time after the Admiralty. Look at this."

Here Winston exhibited with an artist's excusable pride one of his canvases.

"What I want," he went on, "is some position in which I can be of service—in which I can utilize my knowledge and experience. Asquith could readily have given me such a post. I might have taken over the Air. Had I done so twelve months ago you would not have had the scandals that have exercised the public mind."

Riddell was impressed by Winston's accuracy, his methodicalness, and his knowledge of his subjects down to the last detail. Despite his mass of papers and documents he could produce any particular paper and knew precisely what every one contained.

The Gallipoli papers never were published. Asquith finally evaded Winston by appointing a Commission to investigate. There were ten Commissioners under the chairmanship of Lord Cromer and they were given a roving commission—to inquire "into the origin, inception, and conduct of operations of war in the Dar-

danelles and Gallipoli including the supply of drafts, reinforcements, ammunition, and equipment to the troops and Fleet, the provision for the sick and wounded and the responsibility of those departments of the Government whose duty it has been to minister to the wants of the Forces employed in the theatre of war."

This clearly was an investigation into much besides Winston Churchill's part in the operations. Not Winston alone was on trial, but the Government of which he had been a member and in particular Asquith as head of that Government were on trial with him. The inquiry was a prolonged one. The subject-matter was involved, the witnesses to be heard many. The Commission held twenty sittings and published an interim report; held a further sixty-six sessions and produced a further report.

Before the labours of investigation were completed Lord Cromer was dead; two other Commissioners had found a place in the Government; Lord Kitchener had passed from the scene (he was not available as a witness), victim of the attack on the *Hampshire*; and Asquith had been succeeded by Lloyd George as Prime Minister.

Throughout the autumn of 1916, when Winston was co-operating with the patriotic Opposition, the position of the Asquith Coalition was one of increasing difficulty. It was assailed from without and riven within by dissatisfaction and intrigue. It is difficult to pronounce which attacks were the more damaging—those of the outsiders who, without knowledge, denounced it because things were going wrong; or those of the insiders who spoke with knowledge of its shortcomings. Of the outsiders, the principal was Carson who threatened to split the Conservative party and force Bonar Law to resign; of the insiders the leading dissident was Lloyd George, who sought to wrest the conduct of the war from the hands of a Prime Minister he had come to look upon as weak and irresolute.

In the events that led to the final clash between Asquith and Lloyd George in the month of December, Winston played only a minor and intermittent role. He associated himself with both forms of the attack on the Ministry. He supported Carson in his general criticisms of the Government and he also agreed with Lloyd George.

There was a meeting between Winston and Bonar Law at Lord Beaverbrook's home in mid-November and through the eyes of their host we are privileged to see the clash that developed between the two men.

"The contrast," wrote Beaverbrook,<sup>1</sup> "between the temperamental attitude of the two men was remarkable. Churchill frequently showed at the outset of the discussion a really conciliatory and friendly attitude towards Bonar Law. In fact, he more than

<sup>1</sup> *Politicians and the War*, Vol. II, p. 105.

once behaved as if he had no rancour towards the older man. Bonar Law, on the other hand, was, from start to finish, rigid, harsh, and repelling to Churchill. His opponent might give an opening for better relations. Bonar Law kept his doors closed and his window blinds drawn.

"Then Churchill began to deliver an allocution denouncing the Government as though he were addressing not a single individual, but a public meeting—or at least a secret session of the House in war-time. He arraigned the Government on every kind of count as though he were marshalling all the various sections in the Commons to come out together and overthrow the Ministry.

"The only times Churchill ever bores his friends are when he talks to them as if they were a large audience. I saw the effect this style of address was having on Bonar Law, and I several times tried to break into the oration and bring the argument down to a conversational tone. In vain—Churchill swept on unheeding.

"At last Bonar Law said, 'Very well, if that's what the critics of the Government think of it—we will have a General Election.' Churchill was absolutely staggered by this remark."

The meeting had no influence on the course events were to take within the month, events that removed Asquith from the control of affairs and installed Lloyd George in his stead as Prime Minister. Winston had no part in the sorry drama of the passing of Asquith. Nor was he included in the new administration. Lloyd George wished to have the benefit of his co-operation, but the Tories would not have him—"not at any price. Had I insisted the new Ministry would have been wrecked."

Winston had to wait. The Dardanelles Commissioners were still striving with their task. March (1917) had nearly arrived before the interim report was presented. Its conclusions may be summarized as :

Mr. Churchill appears to have advocated the attack by ships alone, before the War Council, on a certain amount of half-hearted and hesitating expert opinion.

We think that there was an obligation first on the First Lord, secondly on the Prime Minister and thirdly on the other members of the War Council to see that the Naval Advisers should have expressed their views to the Council, whether asked or not, if they considered that the project which the Council was about to adopt was impracticable from a naval point of view.

On the 20th February Lord Kitchener decided that the 29th Division, part of the troops which by the decision of February 16th were to have been sent to the East, should not

be sent at that time, and Colonel Fitzgerald by his order instructed the Director of Naval Transports that the transport for that division and the rest of the Expeditionary Force would not be required. This was done without informing the First Lord, and the despatch of the troops was thus delayed for three weeks. This delay gravely compromised the probability of success of the original attack made by the land forces, and materially increased the difficulties encountered in the final attack some months later.

There was no meeting of the War Council between March 19th and May 14th. Meanwhile important land operations were undertaken. We think that before such operations were commenced the War Council should have carefully reconsidered the whole position. In our opinion the Prime Minister ought to have summoned a meeting of the War Council, should have pressed for a meeting. We think this was a serious omission.

We are unable to concur in the view set forth by Lord Fisher that it was his duty, if he differed from the Chief of his Department, to maintain silence at the Council or to resign. We think that the adoption of any such principle generally would impair the efficiency of the public service.

We are of opinion that Lord Kitchener did not sufficiently avail himself of the services of his General Staff, with the result that more work was undertaken by him than was possible for one man to do, and confusion and want of efficiency resulted.

We think that, although the main object was not attained, certain important political advantages, upon the nature of which we have already dwelt, were secured by the Dardanelles expedition. Whether those advantages were worth the loss of life and treasure involved is, and must always remain, a matter of opinion.

The disclosures in the report were not pleasant reading, but there was nothing to cause Winston disquiet. Publication of the findings removed the stigma that had lain upon him. He had come out of it well, but the same could not be said of Asquith or Kitchener. Asquith, indeed, made efforts to prevent publication and wrote to Lloyd George urging that the Report should not be issued without the evidence—which, as he knew, was not possible, containing as it did secret matter that could not be disclosed during the war. Lloyd George did not agree. He told his confidant, Riddell, that he “suspected Mr. A., whom he has known for years, of playing a deep game and that at the right moment he will endeavour to strike and regain his office.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 242.

With the publication of the Commissioners' Report, Winston made a good recovery in the House and clinched his position with a speech in May 1917, delivered at a secret session that was held principally as a result of his demands. It was based largely on a memorandum on the Somme battle which he had prepared and which F. E. Smith had circulated to the Cabinet. In this he accused General Headquarters of dissipating the strength and energies of the army by using up division after division in a war of attrition.

"So long as an army possesses a strong offensive power," he said, "it rivets its adversary's attention. But when the kick is out of it, when the long-saved-up effort has been expended the enemy's anxiety is relieved and he recovers his freedom of movement. This is the danger into which we are now drifting."

The secret session provided him with an opportunity to develop this argument and to advocate concentration on the anti-U-boat campaign. He urged the maintenance of an 'active defence' on the Western Front until America had thrown her millions of men into the scale, so that there might be economy in French and British lives and the organization perfected for the decisive effort later on.

The speech made a great impression on the House and it was plain that Winston's return to office could not be long delayed. On July 16th, 1917, he was offered the Ministry of Munitions, despite lingering opposition among the backwoodsmen of the Conservative Party.

Winston justified his choice by a triumph of organization. When he took over from Dr. Addison the department had a staff of 12,000 civil servants working in more than fifty groups or sub-departments. He reduced the number of groups to a dozen and to ensure complete liaison established an advisory committee with Sir Laming Worthington-Evans as Financial Secretary and Mr. Kellaway as Parliamentary Secretary. Some of the best brains of the country were concentrated on this committee, including ordnance and explosives experts and industrial chiefs. The groups were referred to by initials in the Admiralty fashion, thus G for guns and P for projectiles, and to the advisory committee Churchill gave the peculiarly expressive title of 'Clamping Committee.'

The system worked with amazing efficiency, as he wrote. "Instead of struggling through the jungle on foot I rode comfortably on an elephant whose trunk could pick up a pin or uproot a tree with equal ease, and from whose back a wide view of the scene lay open."

That wide scene embraced the entire battlefields of France and Flanders to which he paid frequent visits as the guest of Sir Douglas Haig at G.H.Q. Thus he obtained first-hand knowledge

of the requirements of the army as they arose and saw that they were speedily supplied. He was with General Tudor, the commander of the 9th Division, when the Germans broke through in 1918 and was able to ensure that the urgent demand for replacements was met.

His activities in France were not entirely confined to the work and requirements of the British Expeditionary Force alone. He accompanied Clemenceau, the French Premier, on a visit to the Front, saw Foch and other French commanders and discussed with them plans of action. The French Government held him in admiration and placed the Château of Verchoq at his disposal. On many occasions after attending to work at the Ministry in the morning, he flew from Hendon to France, watched the battle, and returned home to dinner and more work at the Ministry in the evening.

It is said that from the time he became Minister of Munitions he saw every important engagement in France, sometimes from a British warplane flying over the lines.

Moreover, the work which his department carried out for the Allied armies was vast. Out of British reserve supplies Winston made good the Italian losses in munitions in the Caporetto disaster, and he was also entrusted with the task of equipping the whole of the American armies, which arrived in France in a 'raw' state. His initial contract was one of £100,000,000 to supply medium guns, the transaction being arranged on a 'no profit' basis. The whole vast business was carried out with the utmost satisfaction to both sides despite the fact that Winston and his opposite number in the United States, Mr. Baruch, never met.

When labour troubles threatened to affect the efficiency of his immense supply machine Winston took a strong line. Faced with a series of strikes he secured the backing of Lloyd George and threatened that the immunity of the strikers from military service would be withdrawn if they did not return to work. At the same time he announced that the ringleaders would be proceeded against with the full rigour of the law. The strikes collapsed and the work of the department went on unhampered.

One of the most spectacular incidents in his term as Minister of Munitions was a 'battle for steel' with Sir Eric Geddes, then at the Admiralty. Winston wanted steel plates for his huge tank programme ; Geddes required them for naval building. Here was a clash of two determined personalities. Winston had the advantage of controlling the supplies of steel plates and with great wiliness suddenly let loose a deluge on the Admiralty to satiate them temporarily, and appropriated the remaining supplies for his tanks.

To his success at the Ministry of Munitions let his friend, the late Lord Birkenhead, testify : "Here Winston was in his element, and the immense value of the public services he rendered, though well known to Sir Douglas Haig and his Staff, has never been

sufficiently appreciated at home. The War Office still preserves a comparative chart illustrating the output of destructive agencies when he went to the Munitions Office and when he left it. Had he done no other work in the war he would have deserved well of the nation."

## CHAPTER IX

### *Evolving the Tank*

DURING the closing months of the war, tanks were Winston Churchill's obsession. Their success had opened up unlimited possibilities, and though it had become evident that the Germans would probably capitulate by the end of 1918, it was necessary to make plans for the continuance of the war in 1919. It was to be mechanized war with tanks advancing in hundreds on vast fronts. The Ford Company was given a contract to supply no fewer than 10,000 tanks, while Winston was urging the creation of a Corps with a personnel of 100,000. But November 11th brought the Armistice and there was no need for the war of machines.

Twenty years passed before Winston's vision was realized of vast forces of tanks leading armies into battle, and by then it was the Germans who were proving what the tank could achieve. For Winston this was galling in the extreme. The tank was a British invention and he had contributed more than any other single man to its genesis.

Too many persons played their part in its evolution for him to be termed the "Father of the Tank," but it can be said that without his intervention there would in all probability have been no such machines in the last war. Winston did not invent the tank. But it was due to his foresight that the search was begun for some appliance which would beat the trench. It was due to his encouragement that the disheartening process of experiment was pressed forward until the tank came into being.

There are various men between whom the credit for the mechanics must be divided. But without the original perception and patronage of Winston the vision of the inventor might never have resulted in any practical achievement to overcome the inertia of the military mind.

Winston's exact contribution to tank invention and development was determined by the Royal Commission which, after the war, adjudicated on the claims of inventors. They reported :

"In the first place the Commission desire to record their view that it was primarily due to the receptivity, courage and driving

force of the Rt. Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill that the general idea of the use of such an instrument of warfare as the tank was converted into a practical shape, but Mr. Churchill has very properly taken the view that all his thought and time belonged to the State and that he was not entitled to make any claim for an award, even if he had liked to do so. But it seems proper that the above view should be recorded by way of tribute to Mr. Winston Churchill."

The tank has become the chief weapon of land warfare. It is a commentary on the military mind that for its genesis the soldier is largely indebted to a politician who was First Lord of the Admiralty, to funds of the State which were voted for Admiralty work, and to men who were officers in the Royal Navy. To complete the picture it should be added that the officers of the Navy were engaged on the work of the Royal Naval Air Service. Other minds at a later stage contributed to the invention, but—*ce n'est que le premier pas qui conte.*

The despatch of a squadron of the Royal Naval Air Service to Ostend in August 1914 was the initial move from which Winston's impetus was to spring. 'Planes of the squadron came down behind the German lines and parties set out to rescue the airmen. For this purpose fast-moving vehicles were needed, protected against enemy fire, and the need produced the armoured car. When the Germans began to dig themselves in, there was a further demand on inventive genius—an armoured car that would climb trenches. As I have already stated Winston, then First Lord, gave instructions for the production of a car provided with a portable bridge, but this was not successful. It did, however, have the effect of setting the mental yeast fermenting. When the stalemate of trench warfare developed in France in the autumn of 1914, Winston's fertile brain was directed to the problem of circumventing the trench. In a letter to Asquith he put forward the idea that machines on caterpillar-wheels should be employed.

"It is extraordinary," Winston wrote, "that the Army in the field and the War Office should have allowed nearly three months of warfare to progress without addressing their minds to its special problems.

"The present war has revolutionized all military theories about the field of fire. The power of the rifle is so great that 100 yards is held sufficient to stop any rush, and in order to avoid the severity of the artillery fire, trenches are often dug on the reverse slope of positions, or a short distance in the rear of villages, woods, or other obstacles. The consequence is that war has become a short-range instead of a long-range war as was expected, and opposing trenches get ever closer together, for mutual safety from each other's artillery fire.

"The question to be solved is not, therefore, the long attack over a carefully prepared glacis of former times, but the actual getting across

100 or 200 yards of open space and wire entanglements. All this was apparent more than two months ago, but no steps have been taken and no preparations made.

"It would be quite easy in a short time to fit up a number of steam tractors with small armoured shelters, in which men and machine-guns could be placed, which would be bullet-proof. Used at night, they would not be affected by artillery fire to any extent. The caterpillar system would enable trenches to be crossed quite easily, and the weight of the machine would destroy all wire entanglements.

"Forty or fifty of these engines, prepared secretly and brought into positions at nightfall, could advance quite certainly into the enemy's trenches, smashing away all the obstructions, and sweeping the trenches with their machine-gun fire, and with grenades thrown out of the top. They would then make so many *points d'appui* for the British supporting infantry to rush forward and rally on them. They could then move forward to attack the second line of trenches.

"The cost would be small. If the experiment did not answer, what harm would be done? An obvious measure of prudence would have been to have started something like this two months ago. It should certainly be done now."

The caterpillar-traction vehicle clearly foreshadows the tank. But, strangely enough, Winston was diverted to another idea—instead of crossing the trenches, why not demolish them? Experiments in producing armoured cars were already in progress at Wormwood Scrubbs under the vigorous direction of Commodore Murray Sueter (later Rear-Admiral Sir Murray Sueter, M.P.), Director of Air Department. To him Winston delivered an enthusiastic harangue. Striding up and down his room he dictated a minute directing trials to be held. Between sentences he would interject: "We must crush the trenches, D.A.D.: it is the only way; it must be done."

Murray Sueter left to carry out a steam-roller test for which Winston's directions were:

"I wish the following experiment made at once. Two ordinary steam-rollers are to be fastened together side by side with very strong steel connections, so they are to all intents and purposes one roller covering a breadth of at least twelve to fourteen feet. If convenient, one of the back inside wheels might be removed and the other axle joined up to it. Some trenches are to be dug on the latest principles somewhere handy near London in lengths of at least a hundred yards, the earth taken out of the trenches being thrown on each side, as is done in France. The roller is to be driven along these trenches, one outer rolling wheel on each side and the inner rolling wheel just clear of the trench itself. The object is to ascertain what amount of weight is necessary in the roller to smash the trench in. For this purpose as much as they can possibly draw

should be piled on to the steam-rollers and on the framework buckling them together.

"The ultimate object is to run along a line of trenches, crushing them all flat and burying the people in them. If the experiment is successful with the steam-rollers fastened together on this improved system, stronger and larger machines can be made with bigger driving wheels and proper protection for the complements, and the rollers of these machines will be furnished with wedge-shaped ribs, or studs, which can be advanced beyond the ordinary surface of the wheel when required, in order to break the soil on each side of the trench and accentuate the rolling process. The matter is extremely urgent, and should be pressed to the utmost. Really the only difficulty you have got to surmount is to prevent the steam-rollers from breaking apart.

"The simplicity of the device, if it succeeds, is its virtue. All that is required is a roller of sufficient breadth and with wheels properly fitted and an unscaleable bullet-proof house for the crew. Three or four men would be quite enough, and as the machine is only worked by night it might not be required to stand against artillery. In a fortnight I wish to see these trials."

The steam-roller project was a complete failure. Even when the rollers could be persuaded to move they failed to crush the trench and for the most part they failed to move at all but remained bogged in soft earth.

Winston was not to be diverted from the problem because of this initial failure. Whenever Murray Sueter had to see him on matters arising out of the Royal Naval Air Service, Winston would bring up the problem of beating the trenches. "Now, D.A.D.," he would urge, "put your best brains into this."<sup>1</sup> D.A.D. did not quite see what trench warfare had to do with either the Royal Navy or the Air Service—but anything to help win the war was a good motto. The ultimate responsibility was Winston's, who could also see to footing the bill, a matter which was causing the Fourth Sea Lord to remonstrate. The Fourth Sea Lord had no liking for the Armoured Car Force and its costly experimenting.

There is no doubt that but for the insistence of the First Lord the experiments would have been abandoned. Even the Armoured Car experts became weary of cracking hard nuts which were the proper concern of the Army. Winston persisted and in February 1915 a test of a caterpillar truck was arranged for him on Horse Guards Parade. Hitherto in the contest of Armoured Cars versus Trenches, wheels had let the armoured cars down. Caterpillar

<sup>1</sup> For the complete record of these activities the reader should consult *The Evolution of the Tank*, by Rear-Admiral Sir Murray Sueter, which gives an authoritative account of the birth pangs of the tank.

wheels were suggested as the alternative. For the Horse Guards test a caterpillar truck was made to show its paces, drawn by a patient horse. Murray Sueter himself pushed a truck about to prove how easily it moved. Winston pushed too, saw, and was convinced.

"Although," writes Murray Sueter, "Mr. Churchill does not shine at his best in dealing with mechanical matters, he has the sharpest brain for grasping a new idea that I have ever met and at once saw that my proposals were a better proposition than his steam-roller idea or Squadron-Commander Hetherington's giant wheel scheme. After considerable discussion it ended in Mr. Churchill being quite satisfied that our turreted armoured cars could be constructed with caterpillars instead of wheels, and gave me approval to build eighteen landships before any other department or firm came into the landship picture."

The immediate sequel was the appointment by Winston of a Committee to develop the idea of a superior armoured car on caterpillar wheels. Sir Tennyson D'Eyncourt, the Director of Naval Construction, was the Chairman and among the members were Colonel Crompton, the traction expert, and Squadron-Commander A. C. Hetherington, representing the Director of Air Department. It was under naval auspices that the evolution of the tank was thus developed—the term tank had not then been improvised—and the ideas of the Senior Service were reflected by the title chosen—the Landship Committee. The problem was looked upon as being that of producing a vessel to travel on land, for the stresses of a landship on bad terrain were similar to those of a ship in a rough sea.

This is not the place to pursue the story of the invention of the tank in all its details, nor to refer to all those who contributed to its evolution, though the names of Major-General Swinton, Lieut.-Colonel Boothby, Sir William Tritton and Major Wilson must be added to those already mentioned. Winston's part in the tank's genesis has been sufficiently indicated and I can give only a brief epitome of the subsequent steps.

Before Winston left the Admiralty in May 1915, sufficient progress had been made for him to place a definite order for eighteen landships at a cost of £70,000. He acted on his own initiative without consulting the Board of Admiralty or the Army Council. He had little support outside his band of enthusiasts, and certainly no encouragement from military authorities. Those who heard of the new machines referred to them contemptuously as "Winston's folly."

When Winston left the Admiralty the naval authorities who had murmured against the idiotic caterpillar landships sought to have the experimental work wound up. Thanks, however, to the fight

Murray Sueter put up the work was continued, though on a reduced scale.

In February 1916, when Churchill was in France, "Big Willie," as this first juggernaut was called, was given its official trials in the presence of King George V at Hatfield. Kitchener, aloof and sceptical, represented the Army with officers from General French's headquarters, and Mr. Lloyd George, keenly alive to the possibilities of this new weapon, was also present. "Big Willie" could only raise a maximum speed of two miles an hour with a 150-h.p. engine, but the tests were successful and on February 12th the War Office placed an order for forty of the machines, which were to be secretly manufactured. They all embodied the large double cartwheel "rudder," which was one of "Big Willie's" most remarkable features. This was dropped when the uses of the caterpillar tractor were completely mastered.

Once scepticism had been dispelled a remarkable enthusiasm for the new weapon developed. The War Office increased its order to 150 landships and a special section of the Machine Gun Corps, itself a war-time innovation, was formed to man them. In the meantime, the term "tank" had been adopted on the suggestion of a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence, to conceal the real purpose of the new engines of war.

Then came a major blunder. Winston was out of office; his idea had been taken out of his hands. He sought out the Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, and urged that the tanks should not be disclosed to the enemy until they could be used in overwhelming force. But the military authorities were anxious for battlefield tests and declined to wait. So on Friday, September 15th, forty-nine of the monsters were sent into action in the Battle of Thiepval, which opened the second phase of the battle of the Somme. They did everything expected of them and completely vindicated Winston's enterprise. Haig reported that "A new type of heavy armoured car proved of considerable utility," despite the fact that the attack was launched over a quagmire.

Fortunately for the Allies, the Germans did not profit by this premature disclosure of the new weapon. Twelve months later the tanks were employed in really adequate force, and their onslaught was devastating. Experience had led to the elimination of many primitive features when the tanks made their great attack at Cambrai, "a battle made for them," as Winston himself declared. In all in this operation 378 fighting tanks and 98 auxiliary tanks were engaged. The Tank Corps had come into being albeit still called the "Heavy Machine-Guns" and had proved itself the greatest offensive arm in modern warfare. The action was well staged. There was no preliminary artillery bombardment to apprise the enemy of the coming assault; the tanks led instead of merely supporting

the infantry. The Canadian infantry, under General Byng, were the troops engaged. Says the official history of the Tank Corps :

"As the tanks moved forward with the infantry close behind, the enemy completely lost his balance and those who did not fly panic-stricken from the field, surrendered, with little or no resistance. By 4 p.m. on November 20th, one of the most astonishing battles in all history had been won."

Over the front of more than six miles the German trench system had been captured with 200 guns and 10,000 prisoners. The British losses totalled only 1,500 men. Thenceforth tanks were the decisive factor in the war. Ludendorff, discussing the German decision to ask for an armistice, said that one of the major influences was the unexpectedly large numbers of tanks which were employed against them.

"In cases where they have suddenly emerged from smoke clouds in huge numbers," he wrote, "our men have been completely unnerved. They broke through our foremost lines, making a way for their infantry, wrecking our rear and causing panic which entirely upset our control of the battle."

The tactics the Germans employed in France and Belgium in the blitzkrieg of 1940 were based on the lessons they received from the Allies in 1917 and 1918. If only the advantage which Winston Churchill gave by his work in the evolution of the tank in the last war had been maintained in the Years Between, the campaigns of 1940 would have had vastly different results.

As a postscript to the chapter on Tanks, I must make a further reference to Winston's connection with the junior service and his personal experiences as airman. He was in control of one or other branch of the Air Service during the first eleven years of its existence—from 1911 to 1915, as First Lord he was responsible, as I have indicated, for the Royal Naval Air Service; in 1917 and 1918, as Minister of Munitions, he was in charge of the design, manufacture and supply of aircraft, and from 1919 to 1921 he was the head of the Air Ministry, combining the post of Minister with that of Secretary for War.

His sense of duty combined with his curiosity that is insatiable to make a practical airman of him. His first flight in a seaplane was taken in 1912. The conquest of the air had not then advanced beyond the stage when the sense of gambling with death imparted an additional piquancy to the thrill of flight. Winston was fascinated with the idea of flying and yet was conscious of "a dread of going into the air for the first time." His anxieties prevailed throughout the flight, on which he was piloted by Commander

Spencer Grey. He confessed afterwards that his imagination supplied him with the most realistic anticipations of a crash.

That his concern was no extravagant fancy is shown by a succession of lucky escapes. He took his first lesson as pilot one day ; the next, his instructor was killed while flying the same machine. He took a flight in a new type of seaplane off Southampton and landed safely ; on arrival by yacht at Sheerness he was informed that the seaplane had crashed, with the loss of life of all on board her.

Radical M.P.'s became solicitous for his safety when he continued to make ascents in the perilous 'plane. One member asked in the House whether the Prime Minister would use his influence to discourage members "whose lives are of value to the public" from exposing themselves to needless risk." "I regret," replied Asquith, "that valuable lives should be exposed to needless risks, but I have no reason to suppose that I have any such persuasive influence as the hon. gent. suggests." So the First Lord went on flying.

During the latter stages of the war and the period of the Peace Conference, Winston made use of the 'plane as the means of journeying to and from Paris. On one occasion his machine was on fire in mid-Channel. That time his luck held. Another day his 'plane crashed while taking off, turned a somersault, and was smashed to pieces. He suffered no more than cuts and bruises and his good fortune extended to the pilot.

One summer day in 1919, the margin of escape was less than ever. He himself was handling the controls and executing a turn 100 feet over Croydon Aerodrome, when the machine refused to respond to the guiding stick.

"We were," writes Winston,<sup>1</sup> "scarcely 90 feet above the ground, just the normal height for the aerial sideslip accident, the commonest of all. I saw the sunlit aerodrome and the impression flashed through my mind that it was bathed in a baleful yellowish glare. Then in another flash a definite thought formed in my brain. 'This is very like death.'

"There was no time for fear. The 'plane struck the ground with terrific force. Its left wing crumpled and its propeller and nose plunged into the earth. I felt myself driven forward as if in some new dimension by a frightful and overwhelming force through a space I could not measure. There was a sense of unendurable oppression across my chest as my belt took the strain. I felt as a distinct phase the whole absorption of the shock. Suddenly the pressure ceased, the belt parted, and I fell forward quite gently on the dial board in front of me, safe."

Two hours later he contrived to speak at a House of Commons dinner.

From 'planes it is a natural sequence to bombs, and here again

<sup>1</sup> *Thoughts and Adventures : "In The Air."*

Winston has played his part in the development of a new weapon. It was a contribution but little known until it was disclosed by Col. Turner, former Superintendent of Design at Woolwich, who was the designer of practically all types of bombs used by British forces in the 1914-18 war.

"The drive of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill, played a prominent part in the development of our bombing equipment," Col. Turner wrote.<sup>1</sup>

"He took a deep personal interest in all trials, and was present at Kingsnorth in June, 1915, when the first 550 lb. H.E. bomb was dropped from the airship Astra Torres.

"The attitude of the R.F.C. to bombing was well expressed by a Squadron Leader of that Corps, when in March, 1915, the writer visited his aerodrome in France. Asked whether the 112 lb. bombs were satisfactory, the R.F.C. Officer said: 'We don't use them. We look upon bomb-dropping as the waste of a good pilot and a good machine. But if you care to go over the German lines and drop one, we will arrange for it.'

"Lord Trenchard later became known as a great protagonist of bomb attack, but it took a long time to convert him, and had it not been for the action of Mr. Churchill the material would probably not have been available."

## CHAPTER X

### *Winding up the War*

ON the night of 11 November, 1918 Winston Churchill dined with the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street. The dinner marked the crest of a mighty wave in world events. Behind were the turbulent waters through which they had passed on the way to victory. Before them, but unknown, lay the waters of transition, through which the course must now be set. For a moment they were poised upon the crest. They could savour the satisfaction that comes from a task magnificently performed. It was but for a moment. The waves are never still. The problems a statesman solved yesterday form the new situation that creates the problems of to-morrow.

For Lloyd George and Winston Churchill the respite was the brief space of that Armistice night's dinner. The one must then bend himself to the making of the new world at the Peace Conference, the other must undertake the direction of the great reversal of gears as the industrial machine reverted to peace.

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, May 20, 1938.

From the experiences that followed the end of hostilities in World War the First, Winston and members of the Coalition Government were able to profit. By taking the lessons of 1918 as their guide, they were able to avoid the mistakes that had been made a quarter of a century previously.

It was a fortunate circumstance that Winston had had first-hand experience in 1919 of the change-over from war to peace production. By such and such measures, he was able to recall, we carried this thing through in 1919 ; here precedent can safely be followed ; here difficulties in the past suggest that improvements must be made.

Over and beyond the knowledge of the machinery and practical measures of demobilization, his experience of the past served to illuminate the dark problems of psychology—for it was the psychological factor that nullified the perfection of paper planning and sent things wrong in 1918. There were errors in psychology in carrying out the demobilization of the armed forces that led to unrest bordering on mutiny as men retained in the services were infuriated at the sight of more favoured comrades gaining priority in release and a better place in the scramble for jobs. Another psychological error—made in the blindest good faith—staged the maddest of all general elections within a few weeks of the war's ending and returned the most embarrassing majority to Parliament that has ever troubled a Prime Minister.

Wisdom and sanity were at a discount in the 1918 election. The Jingo ruled the hour. Even the patriotism of Lloyd George was not enough. "Hang the Kaiser," "make the Germans pay," "squeeze them till the pips squeak"—the electors could be satisfied only with the most perfervid declarations of patriotism.

At Dundee, Winston found his electors roused from their customary Scottish restraint. His declarations failed to satisfy them until he had echoed the noisy clamour of the hour. His statesmanship doubted the wisdom of the "Hang the Kaiser" cry—raised, among others, by Mr. Barnes, Labour's representative in the War Cabinet. Dundee was not satisfied until Winston had declared at least for bringing that Prussian figure-head to trial. He had the limited satisfaction of writing to some of his constituents letters that preserved balance of judgment at a time of general delirium. Even so he could only permit himself to hint his doubts on the wisdom of public demands by a series of interrogation marks. Do not let ourselves be robbed of the fruits of victory—but ought the terms Germany imposed on France in 1871 to be the best precedent to follow ? Annex provinces of Germany—but would that not bring in its train a repetition of the evil of '71 ?

He had the satisfaction, too, in that month of November, 1918,

of enunciating the dilemma that was to baffle Allied statesmanship. Make Germany pay—well and good ; but how make Britain and the Allies accept ? In gold or currency—it was not practicable. If goods ?—it would only mean putting our own workmen out of employment.

Winston's was a clearer vision than was vouchsafed to many statesmen and economists. It would have saved much searching of heart during the decade to come if reparations had there and then been written off as an unrealizable asset costing the victor even more to take than the vanquished to pay. But this needed ten years to prove.

The Khaki Election—also called the Coupon Election because of the ‘coupons’ that Lloyd George and Bonar Law gave to the faithful supporters of the Coalition—ended in the rout of the Anti-Coalition forces. Labour was represented by a handful of M.P.s ; the Liberal Party was all but annihilated.

Before the election was over Winston had wound up his work as Minister of Munitions. When the war ended nearly 5,000,000 workers, including 1,500,000 women, were under the Ministry's control. In preparation for the day when a stop would be called to the pouring out of implements of war, detailed plans had been drawn up by various Committees, and these measures worked smoothly when they were put to the test of operation. Gradually the production of guns and tanks and planes and all the vast paraphernalia of war was brought to a halt. By successive steps control was lifted from the country's industrial processes. The workers were released.

The first part of the great task of demobilization under Winston's direction was efficiently achieved. Before he carried out the second and more difficult instalment, there was a partial demobilization in the ranks of the Coalition Government following the General Election. For Winston a new place had to be found. He was offered the choice of War Office or Admiralty with the Air Ministry as a subsidiary in either case. The Prime Minister had decided not to keep the Air Ministry as a separate department—strange lack of appreciation on the part of Lloyd George, who was swifter than most in realizing the importance of new discoveries.

Winston plumped for the Admiralty—you can well imagine why. Reinstatement as First Lord would be proof to the world that his fall was due to the machinations of his enemies. But even before his letter of acceptance had been received the offer was withdrawn. There was a difficult job to be done and he was invited to go to the War Office to face an anxious situation over demobilization.

As in the case of munition workers schemes had been prepared in advance, but though they were theoretically perfect they left out the human element. The plans were based on the release of ‘key men’

first. In theory it was admirable—send the essential men back to provide the framework and get the wheels turning again: then industry would be in a position to absorb men by the thousand. But, alas for the imperfection of human reasoning, application of the scheme led to resentment which mounted to mutiny. The ‘key men’ who were to be the first to leave had also been the last to reach the Army—men whose service was not longer than a few months, perhaps only weeks. Veterans of the war, men who had been at the Front under French, men who had been wounded and gone back to the trenches two or three times were expected to wait for their papers and watch the ‘key men’ scurry back home to get the pick of the jobs. It was more than long-enduring manhood could tolerate. For two months they had viewed this monstrous injustice with resigned indignation and by January, 1919, when the new Minister took over the War Office, Army discipline, which had withstood all the assaults of the barbaric Hun, had been completely undermined. There were disorders on both sides of the Channel. At Folkestone there was mutiny not to be disguised as anything less. And even the august portals of the War Office had had to admit scores of angry demonstrators who had come along to tell authority what the common soldier thought in the common soldier’s language.

It was with a certain relief, we may suspect, that Winston found that peace hath her crises no less than war. The new Ministry was announced on 10 January; the new Secretary for War took over at the War Office on 15 January; within a couple of days he had summoned Sir Douglas Haig home from France for a consultation; and on 23 January he crossed the Channel to obtain sanction for his proposals from the Prime Minister, then engaged in the complexities of re-mapping Europe. On the 24th decisions were obtained from Lloyd George, and the Adjutant-General Sir George Macdonogh was instructed to draw up the two Army Orders to give effect to them. Sir George posted back to London to consult the Army Council and on 29 January the new Orders were issued.

They met the Army’s grievances. First they got rid of the hated ‘key man.’ Release was to be determined by length of service. For those who were retained there was the consolation of double pay to reduce the gap between military and civilian rates. Finally the maintenance of an Army on the Continent was provided for without calling on the men who had borne the burden of fighting, by retaining for two years the young men who had completed their training but had not previously gone overseas.

It was well that Winston worked with despatch to produce his scheme. Even during the fortnight that elapsed discontent was perilously intensified. In many places the men got out of control. There were riots at Glasgow and Belfast. At Luton a mob burned down the Town Hall. At Calais three or four thousand armed men

took possession of the town and a couple of divisions had to be detached from the Army of Occupation to restore order. From the windows of his own department Winston watched anxiously as Grenadiers with fixed bayonets and men of the Household Cavalry rounded up a body of 3,000 demonstrators in Whitehall.

With the issue of the new Orders there was a transformation. Discontent vanished from the air, discipline was restored, and the orderly process of demobilization continued uneventfully. At the end of six months a force of well over 3,000,000 men had been released and had been reabsorbed in civilian life. It was no mean feat of organization.

The lessons of 1918-19 were available for the direction of the second and greater demobilization. It is worth while to recall the main heads of the Explanatory Note in which Winston made his proposals known in January, 1919. This stated :

"On 11 November, when the Armistice was signed, there were about 3,500,000 Imperial British officers and soldiers on the pay and ration strength of the British Army. During the two months that have passed since then, rather more than three-quarters of a million have been demobilized or discharged. The system of demobilization which has been adopted aims at reviving national industry by bringing the men home in the order of urgency according to trades. There is no doubt that this is the wisest course, and it will continue to be followed in the large majority of cases. The time has now come, however, when military needs must be considered as well as industrial needs.

"Unless we are to be defrauded of the fruits of victory and, without considering our Allies, to throw away all that we have won with so much cost and trouble, we must provide for a good many months to come Armies of Occupation for the enemy's territory. These armies must be strong enough to exact from the Germans, Turks and others the just terms which the Allies demand, and we must bear our share with France, America and Italy in providing them. The better trained and disciplined these armies are, the fewer men will be needed to do the job.

"Our Military Commanders, who know what Marshal Foch's wishes are, say that in their opinion not more than 900,000 men of all ranks and arms will be sufficient to guard our interests in this transition period. Therefore, when this new Army has been organized, and while it is being organized, over two and a half million men who were held to military service when the fighting stopped will be released to their homes and to industry as fast as the trains and ships can carry them and the Pay Offices settle their accounts.

"How ought we to choose the 900,000 who are to remain to finish

up the work? When the men are marked for release they obviously ought to go home in the order which will most quickly restart our industries, for otherwise they would leave their means of livelihood in the Army and relinquish their rations and their separation allowance only to become unemployed in great numbers.

"It must be made on grounds which appeal broadly to a sense of justice and fair play. Length of service, age and wounds must be the main considerations entitling a man to release. The new Army will, therefore, be composed in the first instance only from those who did not enlist before 1 January, 1916, who are not over 37 years of age, and have not more than two wound stripes. If anyone has to stay, it must be those who are not the oldest, not those who came the earliest, not those who have suffered the most.

"We, therefore, take these broad rules as our main guide. According to the best calculations which are possible they should give us about 1,300,000 men, out of which it is intended to form the Army of 900,000. If we find, as we shall do in all probability, that we have in the classes chosen more men than we actually require after dealing with a certain number of pivotal and compassionate cases, we shall proceed to reduce down to the figure of 900,000 first by reducing the age of retention to 36, to 35, next releasing the men with two wound stripes and then on to 34.

"As the time goes on we shall not require to keep so large an Army as 900,000 in the field, and it will be possible to continue making reductions on the principle of releasing the oldest men by the years of their age. When, however, the results of the war are finally achieved, the Divisions which have remained to the end will be brought home as units and make their entry into the principal cities of Great Britain with which they are territorially associated.

"Volunteers for one year's service at a time for the Armies of Occupation will be accepted from men who would otherwise be entitled to release if they are physically fit and otherwise suitable; and young soldiers now serving will be sent from home to take their turn and do their share. All these will be in relief of the older men. They will enable the age limit to be further reduced and the older men to be sent home. In particular the 69 battalions of young soldiers of 18 years of age and upwards who are now at home will be sent at once to help guard the Rhine Bridgeheads. They will thus enable an equal number of men, old enough to be their fathers, to come home, and they themselves will have a chance to see the German provinces which are now in our keeping and the battlefields where the British Army won immortal fame.

"The new Armies of Occupation will begin forming from 1 February, and it is hoped that in three months they may be completely organized. There will then be two classes of men in

*Khaki*, *viz.*, those who form the Armies of Occupation, and those who are to be demobilized. Everything possible will be done to send home or disperse the two and a half million men who are no longer required. But they must wait their turn patiently and meanwhile do their duty in an exemplary manner. Any of these men who are marked for home who are guilty of any form of insubordination will, apart from any other punishment, be put back to the bottom of the list.

"There are no means of getting these great numbers of men home quickly unless everyone does his duty in the strictest possible way. It is recognized, however, that service in the Armies of Occupation is an extra demand which the State makes in its need upon certain classes of its citizens. The emoluments of the Armies of Occupation will therefore be substantially augmented, and every man will draw bonuses from the date of his posting to these Armies with arrears from 1 February."

As Secretary for War, one further task in winding up the war fell to Winston's lot—the liquidation of our commitments in Russia. In succeeding Lord Milner at the War Office he became 'heir to the pledges and tragedies' of the Russian situation.

Russia at that time was the scene of civil war, or rather of several civil wars, of revolution and counter-revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks had a precarious hold on the capital and central provinces. In the outer provinces there were a number of anti-Bolshevik movements led among others by Admiral Denikin, General Koltchak and General Wrangel.

The anti-Bolshevik forces had been sustained by pledges of assistance of men and arms. Numbers of British and allied troops were actually engaged on Russian soil. In North Russia, at Murmansk and Archangel, for example, there were 12,000 British and 11,000 Allied troops. In the heart of the desolation of Siberia, Col. John Ward, M.P., with two British battalions, was striving valiantly on behalf of the Omsk Government. At Vladivostok there were under British management training schools for 3,000 Russian officers. Shortly after the Armistice with Germany the War Cabinet decided to assist Denikin, in Southern Russia, with arms, to send officers and equipment to Siberia and to recognize the Omsk Government.

In the New Year of 1919 our commitments had become a source of anxiety. With the ending of the long-drawn-out struggle against Germany, there was no liking for new adventures in Russia. The War Cabinet decisions of November had not, however, been annulled. A definite policy was lacking.

It was urgent that decisions should be taken—either to wind up the Russian operations or to press them with vigour. Only from

the Allied Statesmen assembled round the conference tables at Versailles could the decision be obtained, and in February Winston crossed once more to France to obtain authoritative instructions on the policy to be pursued. The occasion provided him with his only contact with President Wilson, then about to return to the United States after his labours to set Europe to rights. Winston gives a lively account of the meeting.

"It was the very night that President Wilson was leaving on his first return journey to the United States. He had only a short time to get his dinner and catch his train to Cherbourg. He had actually risen from his place to leave the Conference, and there could not have been a less propitious moment for raising an extra, disagreeable and baffling topic.

"However, with the persistence born of my direct responsibilities, upon the various Russian fronts, and with all sorts of cruel realities, then proceeding, present in my mind, I stood up and made my appeal. 'Could we not have some decision about Russia? Fighting was actually going on. Men were being killed and wounded. What was the policy? Was it peace or was it war? Were we to stop or were we to go on? Was the President going away to America leaving this question quite unanswered? What was to happen while he was away? Was nothing to go on except aimless unorganized bloodshed till he came back? Surely there should be an answer given.'

"The President, contrary to my expectation, was affable. He turned back to the table and, resting his elbow on Clemenceau's chair, listened without sitting down to what I had to say. Then he replied frankly and simply to the following effect: 'Russia was a problem to which he did not pretend to know the solution. There were the gravest objections to every course, and yet some course must be taken—sooner or later. He was anxious to clear out of Russia altogether, but was willing, if necessary, to meet the Bolsheviks alone (i.e. without the National Russians) at conference in Prinkipo. Nevertheless, if Prinkipo came to nothing, he would do his share with the other Allies in any military measures which they considered necessary and practicable to help the Russian armies now in the field.' Then he left us."

The concentrated wisdom of the statesmen gathered at Versailles was not equal to the task of giving guidance on Russia. Even the setting up of a formal Commission to whom responsibility could be delegated was beyond their competence.

Winston returned to London with his purpose unfulfilled. From Whitehall he sent appeals to the Prime Minister at Versailles pressing for definite decisions. Lloyd George replied with requests

for estimates of costings. Winston retorted that estimates were contingent on policy.

"With regard to your complaint," he wrote in one piquantly worded note, "that the War Office have not furnished you with information, I must point out to you that the War Cabinet have long been accustomed to deal direct with the Chief of the Staff and other military authorities, and they know as well as I do the difficulties of obtaining precise plans and estimates of cost from military men in regard to this Russian problem. The reason is that all the factors are uncertain and that the military considerations are at every point intermingled with political decisions which have not been given."

By midsummer the Supreme Council of the Allies at length made up its mind. It would carry out its pledge to give aid in the shape of arms and money to Admiral Koltchak and his associates. This decision was definitely worded, but there definition ended. By August Lord Curzon, then Foreign Secretary, in a memorandum was drawing attention to the confusion in Allied policy.

"It cannot be said," he wrote, "that an altogether consistent policy has been pursued. Even now the principles upon which that policy rests in the last resort are in some respects in dispute. Action is taken sometimes by the representatives of the Allied and Associated Governments sitting in Paris or by the institutions which they have set up, sometimes by the Governments themselves. The situation is so complex, and the difficulties of arriving at a decision which is acceptable to all are so great that, in some instances, it would be no exaggeration to admit that there is no policy at all."

There was nothing indecisive about the steps Winston took to carry out the decision to evacuate the Allied forces from Russia. The manner of the accomplishment gave rise to misconceptions at home and Winston was attacked by the Opposition parties, Liberal as well as Socialist, for embroiling the country still further in unpopular adventures in Russia.

Evacuations under enemy fire are difficult operations as we to-day realize only too well from the tragic experiences of Dunkirk and Greece. In 1919 there was no such general appreciation of military commonplaces and when the Secretary for War announced that a volunteer force of eight thousand men was to be raised to cover the withdrawal there was a flurry of protest from the ill-informed and irresponsible.

The problem was not even confined to the military one of removing our own men. There were also the Russians with whom we had been co-operating, the men whose opposition to the Bolsheviks had been sustained and encouraged by our assistance and our promises. As Winston said in his defence in the House :

"Although to us who sit here at home in England it may seem very easy to say, 'Clear out, evacuate, cut the loss, get the troops on board ship and come away'—yet on the spot, face to face with the people among whom you have been living, with the troops by the side of whom you have been fighting, with the Government which has been created by our insistence, with all the apparatus of an administration with all its branches and services—when you get our officers and men involved like that on the spot, it is a matter of very great and painful difficulty to sever the ties and quit the scene. I do not disguise from the House that I had most earnestly hoped and trusted that it would be possible in the course of events for the local North Russian Government to have a separate life and existence after our departure; and with the fullest assent of the Cabinet and the Government, and acting strictly on the advice of the General Staff, we have been ready to hold out a left hand, as it were, along the Dvina River to Admiral Koltchak in the hope that he would be able to arrive in this district, and, by joining the local Russian forces, stabilize the situation and enable our affairs there to be wound up in a thoroughly satisfactory manner."

The soundness of the dispositions made was proved by the success of the operations. Behind the shield of the two additional brigades, the removal of British, American, French, and Italian soldiers, with their stores, was accomplished. General Rawlinson was dispatched to Archangel to conduct the evacuation there. General (later Field-Marshal) Ironside made one final devastating assault on the enemy, to ensure that the withdrawal was not impeded, and when the time came the troops got aboard the transports almost without loss.

The decision to send Rawlinson to Archangel to conduct the withdrawal was an eminently wise one. I am indebted to my friend, the late Andrew Soutar, for a memorandum,<sup>1</sup> which describes how the decision was taken and gives a lively picture of Winston in action. Andrew Soutar had not then dismayed his Fleet Street friends by deserting journalism to devote himself to novel writing. He was attached to Ironside's force<sup>1</sup> as special correspondent of *The Times*, and he returned to London to report. The sequel is told in his memorandum :

I got back (touch of dysentery and other sickness) after eight or nine gruelling months—Murmansk, Archangel, and 250 miles up the river Dwina from Archangel where Ironside had his advanced headquarters. There would be about twelve thousand men up there, and as the river water was falling rapidly, the task of retreating

<sup>1</sup> *With Ironside in Russia* is Andrew Soutar's own inimitably told story of the operations.

to Archangel in order to embark and evacuate, was likely to be extremely hazardous.

When I arrived at *The Times* office, I wrote a three-column dispatch on the situation, slept in the office that night, and was informed next morning that Winston wished me to see him at the War Office and lay any further details before him.

In England, at that time, there was keen resentment among the Labour Party. They refused to countenance the sending out of more troops to Russia, insisted that we should come out and leave the Bolsheviks alone, and actually threatened action if we persisted in fighting !

When I reached the War Office, on a beautiful summer evening (the newsboys were showing placards concerning the cricket scores, I remember), I was shown into about half a dozen rooms—moving like a piece on a draughts board—and being questioned in friendly, yet cautious manner by secretaries and under-secretaries attached to the Chief.

I realized that all this was procedure essential to high politics, it being the rule to go through a caller with a harrow before admitting him to the presence.

When, at last, I entered Winston's room, large, spacious, and certainly impressive, with his simple desk tucked away in a corner, he greeted me affably, placed a chair in position for me so that I should face him across it, and began :

"Now, tell me all about it."

On his writing-pad he had only a single sheet of paper and a lead pencil.

I began to describe the situation out there. His stolid expression conveyed to me the idea that he wasn't listening, that the names of Russian villages and trails and positions were simply blending themselves into a mournful song that came to him from a vast distance. I paused, I remember, frowned a little maybe at his apparent unconcern.

I said to him :

"Give me your pencil and I'll give you a rough sketch with the names of the places."

He smiled that bland smile of his, and said :

"I have them all in my head."

And to my surprise, he actually named village after village, point after point—villages with unpronounceable names. And the area covered thousands of miles ! He knew his North Russia perfectly.

He listened. I talked. Never once did he question my statements ; indeed, he was so tolerant that I expected him to say, of a sudden : "Thanks, you have added nothing to what I knew of the situation, and I'm sorry you've been troubled."

Instead, he got to his feet. The expression on his face had changed completely. The corners of his mouth came down to form that grim and decisive look so characteristic of him when he has made up his mind.

"Come and see Wilson," he said, and put an arm over my shoulder to hurry me across the floor.

I wasn't quite certain that I knew to whom he referred as "Wilson." We climbed the short flight of stairs to another corridor, and came to a comparatively small map room—a plain and unpretentious room, the walls of which were covered with maps. And walking about that room, talking to a staff officer, was the Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff. A tall, angular man with a long, hooked, lean nose and a pair of those blue, Irish military eyes that look right through you, so that they can tell you the sort of back collar-stud you're wearing. There wasn't a chair in the room : we were all standing.

Said Churchill : "Listen, Wilson ! This is Mr. Soutar, and he's just back from Archangel."

I told the C.I.G.S. of the situation. He was most charming, but I could see that he was in a difficulty.

He said to me :

"We cannot send another man out there. I don't think the situation is very serious—well, not so serious as you say."

I began to elaborate, pointing out the extreme difficulties of getting the troops out. In truth, I didn't hesitate to express the opinion that our men were "up in the blue" with only the river Dwina as a "road" back to Archangel ; and the water was falling fast !

He protested : "I'm certain that Ironside and Maynard will get them out, and—"

Churchill's voice came in like the spit of a machine-gun :

"Listen to what he's telling you, Wilson !"

It was an embarrassing moment for me. Here was a mighty soldier being told to hold his tongue while I had my say. The fact that I was in uniform added to the embarrassment : I felt myself drifting back to my "Tommy" days and the longing, then, to tell a "Brass Hat" exactly what I thought of him !

Wilson became more charming than ever. He repeated that he simply couldn't ask for men to be sent out. He had arranged for the withdrawal of the troops, and he was still satisfied that the evacuation could be carried out without more than the usual risks attendant on such an operation.

"I really don't think . . ." he began to object, but that was as far as Winston allowed him to go.

He had been silent for a moment while Wilson was urging on me the utter impossibility of sending more men, then came his order :

"Wilson ! Send Rawlinson out on a destroyer, to-night, and let him fetch them out !"

There it was—quick, decisive, unanswerable. No temporising, no argument. His word ! Rawlinson did go out that night on a destroyer.

I went back with Winston to the private room. He talked of the campaign ; he summoned back his affable manner ; and so we parted. I was left with the impression of a Minister who could make up his mind in a flash. A Minister who knew his job from crown to boots, and . . . could prove it !

By the autumn the Russian operations had practically been wound up, but in the following summer the Socialist opposition were still trying to make political capital out of Russia when a document, known to fame as the Golvin memorandum, caused a minor Parliamentary storm. This memorandum was alleged to have fallen into the hands of the Soviet authorities after the allied evacuation of Archangel—we had not the same knowledge in those days of the technique of the production of this class of diplomatic thrillers. It was brought back from Russia by a Labour Party deputation.

It was dated 6 May, 1919, more than a fortnight before the Supreme Council decision in favour of aid for the White Russians. It purported to convey to M. Sazonoff, last of the Czarist prime ministers, an account of an interview which Colonel Golvin, a White Russian emissary, had had with Churchill. The British War Minister, the document alleged, had promised the White Russian Government an indefinite postponement of the evacuation of the British forces and offered 12,500 volunteers who, while ostensibly covering the withdrawal, would constitute a new garrison.

The publication of this document created a sensation at Westminster. Winston was assailed by Liberal and Labour critics who now accused him of having used his position to 'gamble with lives and gold' in a 'sneaking, underhand war.' Scornfully he repudiated the allegations, pointing to the date of the document as evidence that the interview, which was 'inaccurately and untruthfully recorded,' had taken place before he received his instructions.

In winding up affairs in Russia in the manner I have described, Winston was carrying out a policy which was not his own but which was placed upon him by the Prime Minister. Winston and Lloyd George did not concur in their views on the Soviet. Lloyd George then (and since) was prepared to be more conciliatory in his dealings with the Bolshevik masters of Russia than was Winston. In the years that were to come, Winston was to use strong language in denunciation of Lenin and his associates, as he himself recalled when he made the dramatic announcement to the listening world

in June 1941, promising British aid to the Russians in their fight against the Nazis.

His attitude to the Soviet was set out in a memorandum he submitted to Lloyd George in March 1920. In it he stated not merely his views on Russia, but the principles which he would have followed in dealing with the defeated German foe. The salient passages of this memorandum were :

"Since the Armistice my policy would have been 'Peace with the German people, war on the Bolshevik tyranny.' Willingly or unavoidably, you have followed something very near the reverse. Knowing the difficulties, and also your great skill and personal force—so much greater than mine—I do not judge your policy and action as if I could have done better, or as if anyone could have done better. But we are now face to face with the results. They are terrible. We may well be within measurable distance of universal collapse and anarchy throughout Europe and Asia. Russia has gone into ruin. What is left of her is in the power of these deadly snakes.

"But Germany may perhaps still be saved. I have felt with a great sense of relief that we may be able to think and act together in harmony about Germany : that you are inclined to make an effort to rescue Germany from her frightful fate—which if it overtakes her may well overtake others. If so, time is short and action must be simple.

"You ought to tell France that we will make a defensive alliance with her against Germany if, *and only if*, she entirely alters her treatment of Germany and loyally accepts a British policy of help and friendship towards Germany. Next you should send a great man to Berlin to help consolidate the anti-Spartacist, anti-Ludendorff elements into a strong left centre block. For this task you have two levers : first, food and credit, which must be generously accorded in spite of our own difficulties (which otherwise will worsen) ; secondly, early revision of the Peace Treaty by a Conference to which New Germany shall be invited as an equal partner in the rebuilding of Europe. (This referred to the economic and financial clauses.) Using these levers it ought to be possible to rally all that is good and stable in the German nation to their own redemption and to the salvation of Europe. I pray that we may not be 'too late.'

"Surely this is a matter far more worth while taking your political life in your hands for than our party combinations at home, important though they be. Surely also it is a matter which once on the move would dominate the whole world situation at home and abroad. My suggestion involves open resolute action by Britain under your guidance, and if necessary *independent* action. In such

a course I would gladly at your side face political misfortune. But I believe there would be no misfortune, and that for a few months longer Britain still holds the title-deeds of Europe.

"As a part of such a policy I should be prepared to make peace with Soviet Russia on the best terms available to appease the general situation, while safeguarding us from being poisoned by them. I do not, of course, believe that any real harmony is possible between Bolshevism and present civilization. But in view of the existing facts a cessation of arms and a promotion of material prosperity are indispensable : and we must trust for better or for worse to peaceful influences to bring about the disappearance of this awful tyranny and peril."

After winding up the Russian operations, Winston passed on to deal with another problem of the war's aftermath—the curtailment of our commitments in Mesopotamia. The occupation of that territory by a large British army was costing £40,000,000 a year and there was opposition to the policy of curtailment because of the many political interests involved by the creation of the new state of Irak.

On Winston's suggestion Lloyd George set up a special Middle East department of the Foreign Office to solve the difficulties, but it did not function as he had anticipated. So at the end of 1920 Winston was invited to take over the post of Secretary for the Colonies.

It may be noted, in passing, that his Under-Secretary was the Member for Ripon, who stood pre-eminent in the House by reason of his six feet five inches, and who was destined to make his reputation under three *aliases*—first as Edward Wood, Minister for Education, then as Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India, and later as Lord Halifax, Foreign Secretary and Ambassador to the United States.

At the close of 1920 Winston decided himself to go to Cairo to assist in unravelling the tangled skein in the Middle East. To win support of the Irakis in the war, representatives of the Allied Governments had given varying pledges, some of which nullified others. Not all could be carried out. Some charge of betrayal was bound to arise. Winston's conference decided to appoint an Arab king to rule over the Irakis and Feisal was the choice made. The wisdom of the settlement reached under Winston's guidance was testified to by T. E. Lawrence, who had as nice a sense of honour as any man. Lawrence, who had disowned his own Government in disgust for having, as he thought, betrayed the Irakis, paid the following tribute to Winston in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*:

"Mr. Winston Churchill was entrusted by our harassed Cabinet with the settlement of the Middle East. In a few weeks at his

conference in Cairo he made straight all the tangle, finding solutions fulfilling (I think) our promises in letter and spirit (where humanly possible) without sacrificing any interest of our Empire or any interest of the peoples concerned. So we were quit of wartime Eastern adventure, with clean hands, but three years too late to earn the gratitude which peoples, if not States, can pay."

Winston also made an important innovation by entrusting the Royal Air Force with the responsibilities which the Army had been discharging. For policing a country like Irak, the R.A.F. was equally effective and much more economical. Actually there was a saving of £35,000,000 to the British taxpayer. Even more important for the future was the concentration of a considerable body of our airmen in the Middle East. The experience they gained and the reputation they won was to have a considerable influence on affairs when Irak became the scene of hostilities twenty years later.

Winston was next involved in problems nearer home and the unravelling of Irish affairs.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Irish Peacemaker*

HISTORY will remember Winston Churchill as a great War Minister. His particular aptitudes as man of action have been most prominently and successfully employed in directing warfare against Britain's foes. But he has had his achievements as pacifier—in establishing a new constitution for South Africa and in contributing a solution for the problem of Ireland that had defied British statesmanship for so long.

The administration of the Lloyd George Coalition Government from the 1918 Election to its fall in 1922 has not earned much praise. But it should never be forgotten that it brought peace to Ireland. Lloyd George succeeded where Asquith and Gladstone failed. Winston played his part in the difficult negotiations that led to the signing of the Treaty. And it was only under his careful nursing as Colonial Secretary that the birth pangs of the Irish Free State were eventually completed. His work won from Michael Collins the simple tribute : "Tell Winston we could never have done anything without him." It was the last message Collins sent before he fell a victim to a fellow-Irishman's bullet.

In 1921 Ireland seemed to have reached her darkest hour. The

country was given over to guerrilla warfare, the most hideous of war's hideous forms. No time could have appeared to offer fewer chances of peace. The Cabinet resolved, however, on one last attempt to negotiate an agreement before embarking on the unlimited exercise of force to suppress the rebels. In July an Irish delegation under Mr. de Valera came to London. It took until December to hammer out a Treaty. On the Irish side the principal negotiators were Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins, whose exploits against the Black and Tans had won him his place among the leaders of Sinn Fein.

There is an amusing passage in Winston's recollections—one of the few amusing incidents in the long-drawn-out bitterness of the Irish negotiations—of a meeting between the two men who had had the experience of being hunted men—Winston wanted by Boers and Collins by the English.

"I remember one night," Winston writes, "when Mr. Griffith and Mr. Collins came to my house to meet the Prime Minister. It was at a crisis, and the negotiations seemed to hang only by a thread. Griffith went upstairs to parley with Mr. Lloyd George alone. Lord Birkenhead and I were left with Michael Collins meanwhile. He was in his most difficult mood, full of reproaches and defiances, and it was very easy for everyone to lose his temper.

"'You hunted me night and day,' he exclaimed. 'You put a price on my head.'

"'Wait a minute,' I said. 'You are not the only one.' And I took from my wall the framed copy of the reward offered for my recapture by the Boers. 'At any rate it was a good price—£5,000. Look at me—£25 dead or alive. How would you like that?' Actually no such reward had ever been offered for Collins by the British Government, but this I did not know at the time.

"He read the paper, and as he took it in he broke into a hearty laugh. All his irritation vanished. We had a really serviceable conversation, and thereafter—though I must admit that deep in my heart there was a certain gulf between us—we never to the best of my belief lost the basis of a common understanding."

There was universal relief on the signing of the Treaty but the difficulties were not thereby ended. The Treaty was only the half-way house to the final settlement and it was Winston, as I have said, who had to deal with the complexities of establishing the new order the Treaty had called into being. With the passing of the ancient office of First Secretary for Ireland, grave of many parliamentary reputations, and the granting of Dominion status, Ireland came within the sphere of his administrative responsibilities as Colonial Secretary.

Trouble had not ended in Ireland because a Treaty had been

signed in London. De Valera, implacable advocate of full rights of Republic, intrigued against Griffith and Collins. The wild men had not put away their pistols. The position of Ulster added to the difficulties of the situation. Southern Ireland boycotted Belfast. The frontier villages of the Six Counties were intermittently raided. The fixing of the boundary, in this embittered atmosphere, was a task of the utmost delicacy. Was the prospect of pacification to be blighted once again by the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone?

Statesmen, a decade earlier, had been defeated by these same boundary lines, as Winston recalled to the House in his speech moving the Irish Free State Bill.

"I remember," he said, "on the eve of the Great War we were gathered together at a Cabinet Meeting in Downing Street, and for a long time, an hour or an hour and a half, after the failure of the Buckingham Palace Conference, we discussed the boundaries of Fermanagh and Tyrone. Both of the great political parties were at each other's throats. The air was full of talk of civil war. Every effort was made to settle the matter and bring them together. The differences had been narrowed down, not merely to the counties of Fermanagh and Tyrone, but to parishes and groups inside the areas of Fermanagh and Tyrone, and yet, even when the differences had been so narrowed down, the problem appeared to be as insuperable as ever, and neither side would agree to reach any conclusion.

"Then came the Great War . . . Every institution, almost, in the world was strained. Great Empires have been overturned. The whole map of Europe has been changed. The position of countries has been violently altered. The mode and thought of men, the whole outlook on affairs, the grouping of parties, all have encountered violent and tremendous changes in the deluge of the world, but as the deluge subsides and the waters fall we see the dreary steeples of Fermanagh and Tyrone emerging once again. The integrity of their quarrel is one of the few institutions that have been unaltered in the cataclysm which has swept the world. That says a lot for the persistency with which Irishmen on the one side or the other are able to pursue their controversies. It says a great deal for the power which Ireland has, both Nationalist and Orange, to lay her hands upon the vital strings of British life and politics and to hold, dominate and convulse, year after year, generation after generation, the politics of this powerful country."

There were grave misgivings in the House over the Bill, which for so many Unionists marked the surrender of principles they had fought for much of their political lives. At the behest of their leaders, Austen Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead—a name that concealed the identity of 'Galloper Smith'—they did their duty in

the Division lobbies and the Bill got an overwhelming majority. But their anxieties were not allayed by the continuance of lawlessness.

The troubles of Ireland which for a hundred years had vexed First Secretaries now bore down upon the head of the Colonial Secretary. There were outrages on the border, vendettas in Belfast, reproaches from Sir James Craig (later Lord Craigavon) in Ulster, protests from Collins in Dublin. Winston's capacity for peace-making was taxed to the uttermost. He sent message after message to the men in Dublin, counselling, advising, encouraging and restraining. They were in the frankest terms—not the communications of one Minister to another, but the outspoken letters that pass between friends who are men of affairs.

As an example I choose at random a letter dated 29 April, 1922, addressed to Michael Collins. It starts on a note of congratulation on the courage Collins and Griffith had shown in confronting enemies of free speech and fair play, and proceeds :

"Altogether I see many sober reasons for hope. This makes me wonder all the more why you adopt such a very harsh tone in dealing with Sir James Craig. I am sure he has made a very great effort to fulfil the agreement in the letter and in the spirit, and that he is continuously and will continue striving in that direction. Of course, no one expected that everything could be made right immediately or that the terrible passions which are loose in Ireland would not continue to produce their crop of outrages dishonouring to the island and its people, and naturally you have many grounds of complaint against him. He, too, has furnished me with a long set of counter-complaints, and the Protestants also have suffered heavily in the recent disturbances. Belfast goods of very great value, running into millions, have been destroyed, debts owing to Belfast have been collected illegally and intercepted, and the boycott, I am assured, is more injurious in fact than ever before.

"Instead of these rough communications, I should have thought that the Irish leaders, North and South, would have found it much better to meet together, to take stock of the position, to record what has been achieved, to mark what has fallen short in the working of the late agreement, and to decide on new steps to complete its execution.

"As I have frequently pointed out, the interest of your opponents, North and South, Orange or Green . . . is to provoke the worst state of feeling between the two parts of Ireland ; and they would cheerfully welcome every step and every event which led up to a definite civil war between the two Governments. Your opponents in the North hope to see a Republic in the South because it will bring about *inter alia* such a civil war, in which they know they will have the whole force of the British Empire behind them. Your opponents in the South hope to use antagonism against Ulster as a means of enabling them to snatch the power from the hands of the Provisional Government or else involve them in a series of events so tragical that they will break up under the strain. And on both sides the wreckers dread any approach to the idea of a united Ireland as the one fatal, final blow to their destructive schemes.

"All this seems perfectly simple to me, and I think these people judge rightly according to their own tactical view. What I do not understand is why you should let yourself be drawn into the quarrel. I know Craig means to play fair and straight with you, and I do not think you will find such another man in the whole of the North ; and it perplexes and baffles me when I see you taking up such a very strong, and even aggressive, attitude against him in your public utterances. Although perhaps you get some political advantage for the moment by standing up stiffly against the North, yet every farthing of that advantage is drawn and squandered from the treasure chest of Irish unity."

Griffith and Collins had one great handicap in dealing with the wild men. They had scarcely any armed forces of their own on whom they could confidently rely to suppress them. The provisional nature of things in Ireland was not limited to the Government. In April, Dublin's historic seat of justice, the Four Courts, was seized by a band of fanatics, who proclaimed themselves to be the Republican Government of all Ireland. The Provisional Government had perforce to leave them there for the time being. On the Ulster Border two townships were seized by the Republicans and M.P.s in London became aware of the wrongs of Pettigo and Belleek.

It was when Unionist feelings were thus perturbed that an event occurred which brought home the grim realities of the Irish situation to Londoners, and threatened to wreck the settlement so painfully achieved. On 22 June, the veteran Field-Marshal, Sir Henry Wilson, who had just completed his term of office as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was shot dead on the steps of his house in Eaton Square. The assassins, two in number, were caught on the spot almost with their pistols smoking in their hands. They were Irishmen. Sir Henry was one of the most prominent living Ulstermen, and the circumstances of the crime were heightened by the fact that he had just returned from a War Memorial unveiling ceremony.

Here was seen the crime of Phoenix Park re-enacted in England's capital. It was established that, though Irishmen, the assassins had not acted under orders from Republicans in Dublin. The crime was due to their own murderous initiative.

Parliament was in session and there was an immediate demand for a debate by members who had been roused to a new pitch of misgiving over the Treaty that was not bringing peace to Southern Ireland and which was fulfilling the predictions of men in the North.

Winston had to speak in a House that was charged with emotion. It was not hostile, but if feelings should get out of hand the situation would be fraught with the acutest danger. The highest parliamentary skill was required for the occasion. He had to convince the

House that the reign of outrage would be ended by the Government that had been established in Dublin. He had to menace the Free State Government and yet must not use language that would undermine such authority as that Government had contrived to gain. He said :

"I should not be dealing honestly and fully with this subject if I left in the minds of the House the impression that all that is required is patience and composure. No, sir. Firmness is needed in the interests of peace as much as patience. The constitution which has been published, satisfactorily conforms to the Treaty. It has now to be passed through the new Irish Parliament. There is no room for the slightest diminution of the Imperial and Constitutional safeguards and stipulations which it contains.

"That is not all. Mere paper affirmations, however important, unaccompanied by any effective effort to bring them into action, will not be sufficient. Mere denunciations of murder, however heartfelt, unaccompanied by the apprehension of a single murderer, cannot be accepted. The keeping in being within the Irish Free State by an elaborate process of duality, merging upon duplicity, of the whole apparatus of a Republican Government will not be in accordance either with the will of the Irish people, with the stipulations of the Treaty, or with the maintenance of good relations between the two countries.

"The resources at the disposal of His Majesty's Government are various and powerful. There are military, economic, and financial sanctions—to use a word with which we frequently meet in Continental affairs—there are sanctions of these kinds which are available, and which are formidable. They have been very closely studied, and the more closely they are studied the more clearly it is seen that those measures will be increasingly effective in proportion as the Irish Government and State become more fully and more solidly organized.

"Hitherto we have been dealing with a Government weak because it had formed no contact with the people. Hitherto we have been anxious to do nothing to compromise the clear expression of Irish opinion. But now this Provisional Government is greatly strengthened. It is armed with the declared will of the Irish electorate. It is supported by an effective Parliamentary majority. It is its duty to give effect to the Treaty in the letter and in the spirit, to give full effect to it, and to give full effect to it without delay.

"A much stricter reckoning must rule henceforward. The ambiguous position of the so-called Irish Republican Army, intermingled as it is with the Free State troops, is an affront to the Treaty. The presence in Dublin, in violent occupation of the Four Courts, of a band of men styling themselves the Headquarters of the

Republican Executive, is a gross breach and defiance of the Treaty. From this nest of anarchy and treason, not only to the British Crown, but to Irish people, murderous outrages are stimulated and encouraged, not only in the Twenty-six Counties, not only in the territory of the Northern Government, but even, it seems most probable, here across the Channel in Great Britain.

"From this centre, at any rate, an organization is kept in being which has branches in Ulster, in Scotland, and in England, with the declared purpose of wrecking the Treaty by the vilest processes which human degradation can conceive. The time has come when it is not unfair, not premature, and not impatient for us to make to this strengthened Irish Government and new Irish Parliament a request, in express terms, that this sort of thing must come to an end.

"If either from weakness, from want of courage, or for some other even less creditable reasons, it is not brought to an end, and a very speedy end, then it is my duty to say, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, that we shall regard the Treaty as having been formally violated, that we shall take no steps to carry out or to legalize its further stages, and that we shall resume full liberty of action in any direction that may seem proper and to any extent that may be necessary to safeguard the interests and rights that are entrusted to our care."

The measure of success Winston achieved on that difficult and delicate occasion may be judged from the comment that Bonar Law made to him in the Lobby after the debate. Speaking with suppressed passion he said : "You have disarmed us to-day. If you act up to your words—well and good. If not—" The prospective consequences were left to the imagination.

Winston had dealt with the political situation. It remained to Griffith and Collins to do their part in Dublin, where O'Connor and his men, sallying forth from their citadel, had kidnapped the Commander-in-Chief of the Free State Army, General O'Connell.

Collins mustered such forces as could be relied on. But he lacked the essential aid of artillery. So General Macready, the British Officer in command, received a request from the Irish authorities for the loan of a couple of 18-pounders. Macready referred the request to Whitehall, and the necessary sanction was given. There was only one gunner in the Irish loyalist ranks that day, and on him the fate of Ireland rested. Had the Four Courts not been reduced, and had English soldiery once again intervened in an Irish quarrel, there is no telling what the end might have been. But the fates had exhausted the malice of their sport with Erin. The gunner was spared to fire shot after shot against the walls of the Four Courts.

In the afternoon two more guns were requested and supplied ;

by evening all the ammunition was exhausted and General Macready did not deem it within the limits of his own safety to reduce his reserves of 10,000 shells by supplying the Irish loyalists with 200 rounds more. Happily the attackers had gained just enough advantage. After two days, in which men on both sides had displayed the bravery of Irishmen in a fight, the defenders surrendered. The parturition of the Irish Free State was almost over. Having begun the task of rounding up the wild men, Collins and Griffith did not pause in their work of making the authority of their Government supreme in the land.

On 7 July, Winston sent Collins a message of congratulation and encouragement. It was his final appraisement of the progress that had been achieved.

"I feel," he wrote, "this has been a terrible ordeal for you and your colleagues, having regard to all that has happened in the past. But I believe that the action you have taken with so much resolution and coolness was indispensable if Ireland was to be saved from anarchy and the Treaty from destruction. We had reached the end of our tether over here at the same time as you had in Ireland. I could not have sustained another debate in the House of Commons on the old lines without fatal consequences to the existing governing instrument in Britain, and with us the Treaty would have fallen too. Now all is changed. Ireland will be mistress in her own house, and we over here are in a position to safeguard your Treaty rights and further your legitimate interests effectually."

Once again, Winston wisely urged upon the Irish leader the necessity for co-operation between Eire and Ulster. The goal to be kept in view was the unity of all-Ireland—the prize so great that other things should be subordinated to gaining it.

The history of Eire and Ulster—and indeed the course of the unforeseen Battle of the Atlantic—might well have been different had Winston for the Imperial Government and Collins and Griffith on the Irish side continued to guide affairs. But within a few weeks the workings of destiny had removed the two Irishmen from the scene.

The succeeding month of August had not run half its course before Griffith had died from heart failure. Another ten days and Collins had met the fate he had foreseen—a victim at last of the guns of the extremists. Another six weeks and the Coalition Government had fallen, and Winston had been relieved of his ministerial responsibilities. By then the infant State had passed the danger period. Winston, in the political wilderness, could look back upon the results of his anxious hours of nursing and Michael Collins's verdict on his work: "Tell Winston we could never have done anything without him."

## CHAPTER XII

*Chanak and Crisis*

THE first Coalition Government came into being because of the Dardanelles crisis. The second Coalition went out of office because of the Chanak crisis. And Chanak lies in the Straits opposite the peninsula of Gallipoli. The Turks precipitated the Dardanelles operations. It was the Turks again whose operations led to the passing of the Lloyd George Government. And in both of these crises Winston Churchill played a leading part.

Except that it sounded the death-knell of the Coalition, Chanak would be forgotten. Soon the history books alone will remain to tell of the anxious hours when the fate of war with the Turks depended upon the conduct of a slender force of British troops behind Chanak's barbed-wire defences.

The full story of the clash between Greeks and Turks and the conflict between rival diplomacies that accompanied it makes fascinating reading—a tale of the action of armies and the intrigues of statesmen. But it does not belong to the life story of Winston Churchill. He only took a part in events in their final phase—the final phase of winding up the war.

Peace had long been concluded in Europe before its blessings were shared by the Turks. A peace treaty, the Treaty of Sèvres, was signed in 1920, but its terms were repudiated by Mustapha Kemal and his Nationalists, founders of the New Turkey. They took to arms and the Allies, having by this time no troops at their disposal, authorized the Greeks to apply against the Kemalists the force they could not bring to bear themselves. The Greek Army drove the Kemalists back into the fastnesses of Anatolia, back to their last line of defences. It appeared that these, too, must fall and the cause of Turkish Nationalism be lost for ever. For fourteen days Mustapha Kemal fought at Sakkaria ; his sorely tried forces won the day ; Ankara was saved ; and the Nationalists survived.

Hostilities were suspended and armistice negotiations were begun. The Turks made it a condition that the Greeks evacuated Asia Minor and while the negotiations hung fire they began to liquidate the Greek population of Western Anatolia. At this the Greeks withdrew a couple of divisions from Asia Minor to Thrace and threatened to occupy Constantinople. Against this the Allied Powers entered a caveat—the Greeks must not take the city of Constantine—and thereby the fate of the Greek Army in Asia Minor was sealed. Mustapha Kemal launched an attack and the Greeks, weakened by the withdrawal of two divisions, were routed.

Winston had been no supporter of Lloyd George's fervid pro-Greek policy. He had protested against the continued bolstering up of the Greeks and hostility to the Turks as inimical to our interests as ruler of Moslem peoples and ally of France. But the spectacle of a Turkey, sole master of Asia Minor, threatening a new invasion of Europe was more than he could tolerate. What would be the consequences of a new Turkish inrush into Europe?—the flames of Smyrna and the hideous massacres gave an indication of what might be the sequel. With the Turks in Thrace, the Balkans would be menaced. Had the Allies fought the Turk in Gallipoli, in Palestine, in Salonika, and in Mesopotamia for this? After conquering the Turk were we to be chased out of Constantinople?

Only a slender force of Allied troops—French and Italian as well as British—occupying the neutral zone (a narrow strip along the Dardanelles) stood in the way of the Turkish armies. A few hundred troops at Chanak, and a few at Constantinople, that was all to halt Turkish soldiery in the full flush of victory.

Such was the situation which faced an anxious British Cabinet on September 15, 1922. What was to be done? If the Turks, seeking a way to cross the Straits, were to violate the neutral zone, were they to be resisted seeing that resistance meant war? Lloyd George, supporter of the Greeks, said resist. Winston found himself now whole-heartedly at one with him. Balfour was of the same mind, so were Austen Chamberlain, Birkenhead, and Laming Worthington-Evans.

"We made," Winston wrote, "common cause. The Government might break up, and we might be relieved of our burden. The nation might not support us; they could find others to advise them. The Press might howl; the Allies might bolt. We intended to force the Turk to a negotiated peace before he set foot in Europe."

From Constantinople there came a warning from Lord Plumer, on a visit to Sir Charles Harington, the Allied Commander. He telegraphed his opinion that the Kemalists intended to gain their way by threat of force if that sufficed, by force if force was unavoidable.

Winston was instructed to send a warning telegram to the Dominions informing them of the critical situation and inviting their aid if force had to be met with force. "Are you willing," he telegraphed to the head of each Dominion Government, "to associate yourselves with our action and do you desire to be represented by a contingent?"

This summoning of the clans was despatched in decent privacy on the night of Friday the 15th. On the Saturday Ministers met again—a conspicuous absentee being Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, who had retired for the week-end to his country seat at Hackwood.

It was decided that the urgency was so great that the country had best be informed of the critical nature of events and of the greater crisis that might have to be faced. At the request of the Prime Minister and his leading colleagues, Winston drew up a *communiqué* for publication. It was worded as follows :

"The approach of the Kemalist forces to Constantinople and the Dardanelles and the demands put forward by the Angora Government . . . if assented to, involve nothing less than the loss of the whole results of the victory over Turkey in the late war. The channel of deep salt water that separates Europe from Asia and unites the Mediterranean and the Black Sea affects world interests, European interests, and British interests of the first order.

"The British Government regard the effective and permanent freedom of the straits as a vital necessity for the sake of which they are prepared to make exertions. They have learnt with great satisfaction that in this respect their views are shared by France and Italy, the other two Great Powers principally concerned.

"The question of Constantinople stands somewhat differently. For more than two years it has been decided that the Turks should not be deprived of Constantinople and Angora. Turkish Governments were informed of the intention of the Allies to restore Constantinople to the Turks, subject to other matters being satisfactorily adjusted.

"The wish of the British Cabinet is that a Conference should be held as speedily as possible in any place generally acceptable to the other Powers involved, at which a resolute and sustained effort should be made to secure a stable peace with Turkey. But such a Conference cannot embark upon its labours, still less carry them through with the slightest prospect of success, while there is any question of the Kemalist forces attacking the neutral zones by which Constantinople, the Bosphorus, and the Dardanelles are now protected.

"The British and French Governments have instructed their High Commissioners at Constantinople to notify Mustapha Kemal and the Angora Government that these neutral zones established under the flags of the three Great Powers must be respected.

"However, it would be futile and dangerous, in view of the excited mood and extravagant claims of the Kemalists, to trust simply to diplomatic action. Adequate force must be available to guard the freedom of the Straits and defend the deep-water line between Europe and Asia against a violent and hostile Turkish aggression. That the Allies should be driven out of Constantinople by the forces of Mustapha Kemal would be an event of the most disastrous character, producing, no doubt, far-reaching reactions throughout all Moslem countries, and not only through all Moslem

countries, but through all the States defeated in the late war, who would be profoundly encouraged by the spectacle of the undreamed-of successes that have attended the efforts of the comparatively weak Turkish forces.

"Moreover, the reappearance of the victorious Turk on the European shore would provoke a situation of the gravest character throughout the Balkans, and very likely lead to bloodshed on a large scale in regions already cruelly devastated. It is the duty of the Allies of the late war to prevent this great danger, and to secure the orderly and peaceful conditions in and around the Straits which will allow a conference to conduct its deliberations with dignity and efficiency and so alone reach a permanent settlement.

"His Majesty's Government are prepared to bear their part in this matter and to make every possible effort for a satisfactory solution. They have addressed themselves in this sense to the other Great Powers with whom they have been acting, and who jointly with them are associated in the defence of Constantinople and the neutral zones.

"It is clear, however, that the other Ally Powers of the Balkan Peninsula are also deeply and vitally affected. Roumania was brought to her ruin in the Great War by the strangulation of the Straits. The union of Turkey and Bulgaria would be productive of deadly consequences to Serbia in particular and to Yugoslavia as a whole. The whole trade of the Danube flowing into the Black Sea is likewise subject to strangulation if the Straits are closed. The engagement of Greek interests in these issues is also self-evident.

"His Majesty's Government are therefore addressing themselves to all these three Balkan Powers with a view to their taking a part in the effective defence of the neutral zones. His Majesty's Government have also communicated with the Dominions, placing them in possession of the facts and inviting them to be represented by contingents in the defence of interests for which they have already made enormous sacrifices and of soil which is hallowed by immortal memories of the Anzacs.

"It is the intention of His Majesty's Government to reinforce immediately, and if necessary to a considerable extent, the troops at the disposal of Sir Charles Harington, the Allied Commander-in-Chief at Constantinople, and orders have also been given to the British Fleet in the Mediterranean to oppose by every means any infraction of the neutral zones by the Turks or any attempt by them to cross the European shore."

The consequences of that *communiqué* were considerable. It was read by the people at home that September Sunday and caused visions of 1914 over again. It was read by Curzon in his retreat at Hackwood and aroused his outraged mind to a high pitch of indigna-

tion. It was read by Poincaré, the French Premier in Paris, and prompted him to send a telegram withdrawing the French contingent from the neutral zone ; Poincaré was not going to embroil France in war to save the face of the Allies. It was read in the Dominions and caused the maximum disquiet in official circles, for its publication preceded the decoding of the warning to Premiers despatched almost twenty-four hours ahead.

It was also read by Mustapha Kemal in Asia Minor—and Mustapha Kemal was struck as Lord Curzon was struck at Hackwood by the bellicosity of the language employed. Curzon was indignant ; Mustapha Kemal was impressed. He ordered his troops away from Chanak. It might have been bellicose, but it was a success. Winston's bellicosity was supported by General Harington's diplomacy. The Allies were able to extricate themselves from the Turkish imbroglio without loss of face even if honour did not shine too brightly.

Winston could claim a large share of the credit for keeping the Turk out of Europe. Let Harold Nicolson testify on this point, one on which he pronounced with his customary deftness in his memoir of Curzon<sup>1</sup> :

"It is sad for any admirer of Lord Curzon to have to admit that he himself can claim no share in this reckless and triumphant gesture. To Mr. Lloyd George and above all to Mr. Churchill is due our gratitude for having at this juncture defied not the whole world merely, but the full hysterical force of British public opinion."

Lloyd George and Winston kept the Turk from Europe, but there were no bouquets at the final curtain. The bellicose *communiqué* might deter Mustapha Kemal in Asia Minor. It alarmed the Conservatives at home and infuriated Liberal and Socialist opinion. Bonar Law's declaration that Britain could not act alone as world policeman was the keynote of a popular outcry which was raised here and was echoed in the Dominions, loyally though their Governments had pledged themselves in response to the appeal. Churchill bore the brunt of the attack for attempting, as the critics alleged, to "dragoon the Empire into war."

Even Lloyd George was not so furiously assailed as his Colonial Secretary.

The Conservatives were alarmed. Uneasiness had been increasing at the Lloyd George methods of government. The Irish Settlement had been a grievous burden to bear. Chanak was the final straw.

With Chanak the curtain descends on the winding up of the war. The curtain goes up at the Carlton Club on the first determining act of politics in the Years Between.

<sup>1</sup> *Curzon, the Last Phase*, p. 272.

*PHASE THE FOURTH*

*The Years Between*

. . . Faithful to his trust,  
*In the extremest points of justice, just ;*  
*Well knowing all, and loved by all he knew ;*  
*True to his king, and to his country true ;*  
*Honest at court, above the baits of gain ;*  
*Plain in his dress, and in his manners plain ;*  
*Possessing much, and yet deserving more ;*  
*Deserving those high honours which he wore*  
*With ease to all, and in return gain'd fame*  
*Which all men paid, because he did not claim ; .*  
*When the grim war was placed in dread array,*  
*Fierce as the lion roaring for his prey.*

CHARLES CHURCHILL, Independence.

## CHAPTER I

### *The Coalition Falls*

IN our political history the period of the war is like an ocean dividing the old world from the new. The spacious days of the past, so comfortable in retrospect, when Tory Government succeeded Liberal, and Liberal gave place to Tory, ended with 1914.

The new force of Socialism, so disturbing to the timorous, so menacing to the idle-affluent, had begun to manifest itself while the century was young. After the war Socialism dominated the scene. In the first post-war election in 1918 the Liberals were relegated to third place. They have contrived to preserve the existence of their historic party, but the slow process of attrition has sadly reduced the numbers of their representatives at Westminster, though Liberalism exerts an influence far greater than is proportionate to its forces.

In this simplification of politics and progression from a three-party back towards the traditional two-party alignment, Winston Churchill has taken a leading part. It came to involve him in a second transfer of his political allegiance, thereby giving a new handle to his critics.

Winston, a political realist, has a vision that presents issues in clear-cut form—in black and white without gradations of greys, or in true blue and red without shadings in political pinks. His vision of post-war politics was of the simple opposition of Socialism and Anti-Socialism. Looking on Socialism as only a shade less detestable than the virulence of Bolshevism, he conceived it the duty of all anti-Socialists to unite to face the peril from the Left.

During the closing months of the Lloyd George Ministry, he worked for the promotion of a Centre Party, under which the existence of the Coalition would have been perpetuated. In this he was supported by Lord Birkenhead and by Austen Chamberlain, now become Leader of the Conservative Party in succession to Bonar Law. Conservative members did not, for the most part, feel inspired by the idea of a Centre Party. The Conservative Party, so far as they were concerned, was the most effective organization for the combat of Socialism, and they began to yearn for the delights of the party game. Sir George Younger and the Conservative

Central Office campaigned behind the scenes against the continuance of the Coalition in any form.

By 1922 there was not much magic left in the name of Coalition. Even the fame of Lloyd George, the man who won the war, was beginning to burn dim. Men who had gloried in the brilliance of his leadership were now questioning the unavowed opportunism of his policy, the unorthodoxy of his methods. A formidable indictment was made against the Coalition Ministers. They talked of economy, it was said, and spent money like water ; they pretended to support industry and piled on taxation ; they dallied with Bolshevism and supported campaigns against it ; they coquetted with Germany and played fast and loose with France. "As a result of their inconsistencies," *The Times* acidly observed in a famous leader, "the word of England lost currency throughout the greater part of the world as the word of an upright land."

The Chanak crisis brought the Conservative mutineers against the Coalition into open revolt. Bonar Law precipitated events by a letter to *The Times*, protesting that Britain should not alone assume the burden of action in resistance to the Turks. "We cannot," he wrote, "act as policemen of the world." The letter was published on October 7, and such was its effect on Conservative opinion, already exacerbated, that on October 12 Austen Chamberlain found it necessary to summon a meeting of Unionist Ministers to discuss the situation, and then to convene a full meeting of Unionist M.P.s and peers to be held at the Carlton Club on October 19. The fate of the Coalition Government would be determined at that meeting.

The intervening seven days were a period of activity for Tadpole and Taper behind the scenes. The course of political history for the ensuing decade would be decided. Either the Coalition would continue as a Centre Party against Socialism or the Conservatives would throw off their allegiance and a reversion to party politics would ensue. It was an anxious week for Winston Churchill. He was the leading protagonist of the Centre Party but was debarred from attendance at the meeting. Nothing could be more vexatious to the spirit of a man of action than to have to await the determination of his fate by a jury before whom he was not competent to plead. What was possible to rally his colleagues to the cause he did. The leading Unionist Ministers met at his house to dine. Lloyd George was also of the party. Loyalty to the Coalition was pledged. Curzon, who was one of the guests, in common with his colleagues, agreed that the Coalition should appeal to the electors for a new lease of life.<sup>4</sup>

A second dinner party was arranged to be held at Winston's house, but the guests assembled without Curzon. In the interval "George wobbled" as the wits said, handed in his resignation,

and allied himself with the Anti-Coalition group. He could no longer stomach the "garden suburb," that rival secretariat, housed in huts in the garden of 10 Downing Street, which the Prime Minister employed for his personal incursions into the field of diplomacy and international affairs.

Curzon's defection was a blow for the Centre Party group, but when the Carlton Club meeting was held it was Stanley Baldwin, President of the Board of Trade, who delivered one of the two decisive speeches. His description of Lloyd George as a dynamic force has its place in history—"a dynamic force is a terrible thing; it may crush you, but it is not necessarily right." Bonar Law pronounced the final sentence that "the Coalition must end." Austen Chamberlain and his fellow-Coalitionists argued in vain. The Carlton Club meeting by 187 votes to 87 decided to withdraw from the Coalition.

It was the end of Lloyd George's premiership and the end of Winston's schemes for a Centre Party. Bonar Law, the hand of death already upon him, formed a Government without the co-operation of the leading members of the party—a Government of "second-class brains," in Birkenhead's phrase. A General Election immediately followed.

Despite the Carlton Club verdict, it was as a Centre Party man, though not in name, that Winston for the fifth time invited the suffrages of the electors of Dundee.

"I stand," he assured them in his address, "as a Liberal and Free Trader, but I make it quite clear that I am not going to desert Mr. Lloyd George or the high-minded Conservatives who have stood by him and who are exposed alike to the malicious intrigues of Die Hard and Wee Free factions."

The principles of Liberalism were now menaced by two opposite dangers. On the one hand were the unprogressive Conservatives, and Winston represented Bonar Law's ministry as being super-reactionary. "It is a Government which stands on far too narrow a basis to be capable of securing political stability. Four out of the five great Secretarieships of State are held by Members of the House of Lords. Out of 37 Ministers, 19 are peers or sons or brothers of peers. The diehard elements are very strongly represented.

"But if the character and composition of the Government reminds us of the days of King George III rather than of King George V, the policy that has been announced by the new Prime Minister carries us back to the Middle Ages." He stigmatized Bonar Law's policy as one of negation—a do-nothing policy. Over the portals of 10 Downing Street the Premier had inscribed : "All hope abandon ye who enter here."

"I will never stifle myself in such a moral and intellectual sepulchre." It was folly to suppose that Socialism, Communism

and other revolutionary doctrines could be corrected by a 'do-nothing' policy.

He drew no distinction between Socialists and Communists, who formed the second menace to Liberalism. "Mr. Gallacher," he declared, "is only Mr. Morel (one of the Socialist leaders of the day) with the courage of his convictions and Trotsky is only Mr. Gallacher with the power to murder those whom he cannot convince."

Menaced on the one side by stagnation and on the other by revolution, where was the elector to turn for salvation? "We have," Winston assured him, "a national conception as opposed to the rule of any class. We have the principles of Liberalism and the great mass of the Liberal Party. We have very large numbers of moderate-minded Conservatives. We have distinguished Unionist statesmen like Lord Balfour, Mr. Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead and Sir Robert Horne, resolved to pursue the middle course of wisdom and safety."

Winston would have developed his thesis of the "middle course for wisdom and safety" in a series of masterly speeches had he been able to take part in the campaign, but three days before the contest opened his health, which hitherto had supported him magnificently, suddenly failed. He had to undergo a serious operation for appendicitis and he was kept out of the fight until two days before the poll. Mrs. Churchill and some loyal friends had to conduct his campaign for him.

On the eve of polling-day he faced a meeting of the electors in Dundee Drill Hall. They were evidently hostile and it was equally apparent that their hostility was pronounced. From the looks of passionate hatred he received he concluded that it was only his helpless condition that prevented them from attacking him. His opening remarks were the signal for the Scottish heckler to exercise his prerogative and heckling gave place to continuous interruption and uproar. "You are beaten," "You'll be at the bottom," were the only articulate sounds to rise above the increasing volume of discordant noise. The candidate, a sick man, had no chance of making himself heard a few feet beyond the edge of the platform. A seething crowd took possession of the building, chanted the dreary refrain of the 'Red Flag' and gave a conclusive demonstration of their dislike of free speech. Power of massed lungs triumphed. The meeting was abandoned.

When the declaration took place, Winston was not placed among the elect. His majority of 15,000 at the Victory Election was transformed into a deficit of over ten thousand. Dundee returned at the top of the poll a prohibition candidate, Mr. Scrymgeour, who at last gained the reward of persistency. Five times before he had stood for Dundee: five times before he had

been beaten by decisive majorities. At his first attempt he gained the support of fewer than 400 voters; now he claimed over 32,000.

So Winston found himself, as he said, "without an office, without a seat, without a party, and without an appendix." At least he had the saving grace of humour. He could reproach fate for having brought so sorry a conclusion to a year which had been the most successful in his ministerial career, marked by his work on the difficult and delicate problems of Irak, Palestine and Ireland. There was one consolation—defeat set him free to nurse himself back to strength. He left the country to recuperate in the milder climate of Italy and Spain. Political affairs could wait until the spring.

## CHAPTER II

### *In the Wilderness*

WINSTON CHURCHILL did not sit in the Bonar Law Parliament. Before he again stood before the electors death had terminated Bonar Law's brief premiership. Stanley Baldwin had succeeded to the inheritance, a man less known to the country at his accession than any Prime Minister for a hundred years—a fact that added to the bitterness of soul that afflicted his rival, Lord Curzon, at losing the prize he thought was to have been his. "A man of no experience," he faltered between his tears, "and of the utmost insignificance."

Mr. Baldwin—the simpler title seems more fitting to the man than the dignity of the Earldom—began his Premiership by seeking to appoint the Free Trader, Reginald McKenna, as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Within the space of a few weeks he had dissolved Parliament to seek from the country a mandate to embark upon a policy of protection and imperial preference.

An election fought on Free Trade was a boon to the Liberals. Baldwin had repeated the service to the disunited Liberal Party that Joseph Chamberlain had performed a quarter of a century earlier. Co-Libs and Wee Frees could coalesce to maintain the cause for which Cobden had fought, leaving the Prime Minister with the consolation of having achieved what was beyond any other person's competence. "I never thought," he quaintly admitted, "there was a sufficiently large bed to hold Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George, but they have climbed into the same one and I think we will wait to see which kicks the other out."

Lloyd George and Asquith made up their differences and Winston, too, acknowledged his old leader. The National Liberal Club could exhume their portraits from the sepulchre of the basement and restore them to the honour of exhibition on the walls. Not every prodigal returned is accorded the welcome of the shifting canvas.

Winston had the choice of a number of constituencies. He decided to accept the invitation to stand for West Leicester, where his opponent was a Socialist-pacifist, Pethick-Lawrence (who, with a peerage, was to take office with the Socialists in 1945, as Secretary for India). Leicester electors not long before had inflicted ignominious defeat on Ramsay MacDonald, who throughout the war had been steadfast to the cause of pacifism.

His first public appearance after the announcement of the election was in the traditional Liberal citadel of Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Here (16 November, 1923) he denounced the futile and inglorious parliament that was terminating its brief existence by the attempted assassination of Free Trade. He passed on to probe the mystery of Stanley Baldwin's conversion to the faith in tariffs.

"Mr. Baldwin," he said, "is a very honest man ; he tells us so himself (laughter) and I for one am quite ready to believe him. It is a fine thing to be honest, but it is also very important for a Prime Minister to be right."

"I am forced to ask : when did Mr. Baldwin reach this extraordinary conclusion that the free import of foreign goods into the home market is the cause of existing unemployment? It was certainly not in his mind a year ago at the General Election when, as Mr. Bonar Law's principal lieutenant, he appealed for five years' tranquillity and supported Mr. Bonar Law in saying that a disturbance of our fiscal system was the cause of more loss than gain.

"It was certainly not his opinion when he became Prime Minister, for his first act was to send for Mr. McKenna and ask this eminent Free Trade financial authority to be his right-hand man as Chancellor of the Exchequer. All through the summer he was beseeching Mr. McKenna to come to his aid. Right down to the month of August he was still urging Mr. McKenna to join him. He was appealing to him just as earnestly—and just as honestly—as he has appealed to those protectionist and Imperial Defence politicians, Lord Birkenhead and Mr. Austen Chamberlain, to join him to-day.

"Obviously it must have been a very important event, something so compulsive and urgent that made him feel it his duty as an honest man (laughter) to jeopardize his Prime Ministership, to destroy the Parliament, newly elected, which had acclaimed him, to plunge this unfortunate country into the sterile waste and turmoil of a most unpopular election.

"We have evidently witnessed a sudden mystic process of almost

miraculous conversion. You will remember how Paul was going down to Damascus when he saw a light shining on the way. And you will also remember the case of Balaam's ass (laughter) who saw something in his path not visible to the mundane eye (laughter). What was this revelation?"

It is apparent that Winston was looking forward to smiting his opponents hip and thigh on a battle-ground so familiar as the tariff issue provided. But he reckoned without his Socialist opponents. They shared his opposition to tariffs ; yet they fought him with the weapon of personal prejudice. The uproar at Dundee Drill Hall twelve months before had been much publicized. Followers of Trotsky might not have the power in this country to "murder those they cannot convince," but they could still shout down the man they could not argue with.

Throughout the election Winston was made the victim of an organized campaign of rowdyism. The methods of Dundee were imitated and improved upon. Meeting after meeting ended in scenes of disorder. Winston was frequently in danger of personal assault. In one strong Socialist area a police escort had to be provided for him, and it was thought advisable to warn Mrs. Churchill not to carry out her intention of going to speak at the same place.

Politics were largely left out of this Socialist campaign. His opponents played on personal prejudice existing in the uninformed popular mind against his part in Antwerp and Gallipoli. A curious time-lag in opinion facilitated these tactics. During the war, when the Conservatives in the House were campaigning against him, popular opinion was unaffected. When Winston went to France, men of the forces who recognized him greeted him with cheers. Now, eight years later, the old slanders were rehashed to inflame the electors.

Winston would rise to speak about the evils of tariffs and the voice of the heckler would be heard : "What about the Dardanelles?" He would refer to the benefits of Free Trade and the familiarly raucous voice would shout : "What about Antwerp?" As days and nights passed and the taunts were continued he was forced to answer the detractors.

"I have heard," he said, "there is a campaign of defamation going on in the highways and byways and in holes and corners, destined to prejudice the electors against me on account of the Dardanelles. In the whole of the findings of the Report of the Royal Commission there is not one word of detraction of what I did. . . . The Dardanelles might have saved millions of lives. Don't imagine I run away from the Dardanelles ; I glory in it."

From Sir Ian Hamilton, Winston received a personal message of triumphant vindication on the Dardanelles. The pity was that

it should have been necessary. The silence of Asquith eight years before was still exacting its penalty on Winston then. From Asquith he received a message of support declaring : "Upon your success depends in no small degree the fate of the fallacious protectionist proposals." A message on the Dardanelles would have been more to the point at that juncture, but the Asquithian silence was preserved.

There was no resisting the tide of obloquy. After the mockery of a democratic contest, West Leicester rejected him by 13,000 votes to 9,000. Winston's career was at its nadir.

There was small consolation for any of the party leaders on the results of the 1923 election. Baldwin was mortified by the loss of the majority Bonar Law had won, Conservative representation being reduced from 347 to 255 seats. Asquith and the reunited Liberals, 158 strong, still ranked as third party in the House. MacDonald and the Socialists claimed 191 seats and had to face the dubious prospect of office without power. Winston was at least spared participation in the parliamentary sequel.

Only one thing emerged clearly from the poll—Free Trade was saved. But whether Conservatives, Socialists or Liberals were to rule was no longer in the hands of the electors. Any two parties in combination could out-vote the third. Asquith and the Liberals were numerically the weakest but they held the balance of power. In a speech of characteristically Asquithian phrasing, the Liberal leader pronounced for Ramsay MacDonald. He would install the Socialists on the Treasury bench. Labour for the first time was to rule—but only so far as the Liberals would permit.

Asquith's decision brought Winston and the Liberals to the parting of the ways. Since the break-up of the Coalition, Winston had developed his simplification of the political issues. On the one hand he saw Socialism and revolution, on the other the anti-Socialist forces. His constant aim had been to unite the anti-Socialists under the progressive banner of a middle party. Now the Liberals were leagued with the forces of revolution. This was not his conception of the Liberal role. He took up his pen to deliver an emphatic protest. He was almost the only considerable figure in politics who could offer a detached judgment on Asquith's decision. The Liberals were committed by it, the Socialists were exalted and the Conservatives reduced. Winston was in no way involved. On 17 January, 1924, a letter above his signature appeared in the public press. Asquith had by then pronounced against the Conservatives, but the death sentence had not been carried out.

"The currents of party warfare," Winston wrote, "are carrying us all into dangerous waters. The enthronement in office of a Socialist Government will be a serious national misfortune such as has usually befallen great States only on the morrow of defeat

in war. It will delay the return of prosperity, it will open a period of increasing political confusion and disturbance, it will place both the Liberal and Labour parties in a thoroughly false position.

"The Liberal party will be led into supporting Socialists whom they have just been fighting in hundreds of constituencies throughout the country, and who will still be attacking them and undermining them in those constituencies with ceaseless activity.

"The Socialist party will be called upon to conduct and administer the business of this immense community without the reality of power which springs from the will of the majority, or the sense of responsibility which arises from the reality of power. They will be invited to cure the distresses of the time on the express condition that they use none of the remedies which they have advocated and in which they believe, and under the threat that if they have recourse to these remedies they will be immediately dismissed.

"They will be invited to continue in office on sufferance in order that if they are violent they may be defeated and if they are moderate they may be divided.

"And this is called giving Labour a fair chance to govern. It is no fair chance to Labour ; it is no fair chance to Britain. It is only a fair chance to faction and manœuvre. . . .

"The great central mass of the nation desires to see foreign affairs and social reform dealt with by the new Parliament on their merits without rancour or prejudice, and in a sincere spirit of good-will. All such prospects will be destroyed by the accession to office of a minority party innately pledged to the fundamental subversion of the existing social and economic civilization and organized for that purpose and that purpose alone. Strife and tumults, deepening and darkening, will be the only consequence of minority Socialist rule."

The letter went on to make suggestions by which the calamity Winston foresaw might be averted. It produced no immediate effect. The newspapers which a few mornings later recorded the death of Lenin, also announced the advent of the first Labour Government to office.

Winston decided that he could no longer continue to support the Liberal cause now tarnished by association with Socialism. For him as anti-Socialist, the only possible course was co-operation with the Conservatives, the only party whose resistance to Socialism could be relied upon. He looked for an opportunity to invite the verdict of the electors. The chance was not long delayed.

In February a vacancy occurred in the Abbey Division of Westminster caused by the death of the member, Brigadier-General Nicholson. Feelers were put out to the Conservative Party leaders and it appeared that Winston would become the official party candidate, but when the matter had almost been arranged, the local

Association complicated the situation by adopting a candidate—Captain O. W. Nicholson, nephew of the late member. Baldwin had favoured Winston's candidature, but had perforce to support the choice of the local party.

It was a delicate position for Winston, seeing that if he stood he would have to oppose the official nominee of the party to which he was offering his allegiance. Many prominent Conservatives, however, urged him to proceed and he resolved to stand as a Constitutional.

Winston has been the target for many political brickbats for having deserted both Conservatives and Liberals. Inconsistency is a convenient stick with which to beat the political dog. And when high office followed his second change of party, he was accused of sacrificing his principles to gain place, or charged with being a careerist without having a principle to sacrifice. Read the speeches he made at the time and you will find that he left the Liberals to rejoin the Conservatives under the pressure of strong convictions. In his speech announcing his decision to stand for the Abbey Division he said :

"My candidature is in no way hostile to the Conservative party or its leaders. On the contrary I recognize that that party must now become the main rallying ground for the opponents of the Socialist party. In the King's Speech of the late Government the Conservative leaders have announced a broad progressive policy in social matters and have made declarations which in their main outline might well have served as the King's Speech of a Liberal Government.

"In his letter to Burnley electors only a week ago Mr. Baldwin made it clear that he accepted the verdict of the electors on the question of a general tariff and he appealed in consequence for Liberal support. Indeed anyone can see that a large measure of Liberal support must be won by the Conservatives if there is to be an effective resistance in the big struggle that is coming and coming soon.

. . . "It is only by co-operation on independent and honest lines that a foundation can be built strong enough to sustain a stable and efficient Government in these critical times, and rescue us from the increasing confusion of a three-party system and minority rule. I am sure that in the coming contest throughout the country, however many differences of opinion there may be, or however many schools of political thought there may be, there will be only two sides."

As to the immediate campaign, he submitted that a great constituency such as the Abbey Division ought to have a strong view of its own on the grave issues of politics and should exert a proper influence in national affairs.

"If I thought that the present Conservative candidate really

represented the force of character of the constituency I should not have come forward as a candidate. An important public principle is involved. The days of family preserves and pocket boroughs ought not to be revived. It is not right that the Westminster Abbey division should be passed on from hand to hand as if it were a piece of furniture—handed on from father to son, or from uncle to nephew."

A statement had appeared that he had declined to join the Conservative Party. On this he observed :

"I do not think it would be right of me to make a change like that for the purpose of securing an easy entry into Parliament. I have lived the last twenty years of my life in a certain political position, opposed both to protection and to Socialism. Almost every election I have fought has been on these two points and if I am able to co-operate cordially with the Conservative Party at this juncture it is not because I have changed my position. It is because they have very wisely and rightly returned or are in process of returning to a broad and progressive platform.

"I can unsay nothing that I have said in praise of Liberalism as a great and modifying influence on public affairs.

"Coalition was killed at the Carlton Club. The idea of a Centre Party grounded around Liberalism perished with the decision of the Liberal leaders to put the Socialists into power. There remains only a united and intact Conservative Party in co-operation with a Liberal Wing on the lines of 1886. Such a Liberal Wing would modify Conservative policy in proportion to its members and strength and would afford the nation the guarantee that it requires against retrogression. Thus and thus alone will a line be formed strong enough and broad enough to resist the oncoming attack of the Socialist party with its old heresies and new prestige."

Of all the elections Winston has fought he enjoyed most the contest for the Abbey Division. He had a new cause to fight for. He was leading the first campaign of the Rest versus Socialism. There was no Centre Party but he was giving an indication to the country of how the Centre Party would have fought. He was the Centre Party personified. You can savour the zest he felt in his speeches. The old Churchill was brought to life anew. There was no repetition of the hackneyed catchwords against Free Trade, but a vigorously proclaimed new gospel.

"Westminster," he declared, "has it in its power to send to our Dominions beyond the seas, to our friends and allies an important message. It will be a message that a new current has begun to flow—that party squabbles will not obstruct the reassertion of the national consciousness of Britain and that the British people to whom the whole world looks for example and guidance is not going to slide and slither weakly and hopelessly into Socialist confusion."

The Socialists had begun their administration in the mildest-mannered fashion, but Winston warned the electors not to be deceived. "How well," he said, "the Socialist Government is doing. How moderate, how gentle they are. How patriotic Mr. Thomas's speeches. How lofty Mr. MacDonald's views of his functions. How pious is Mr. Henderson. How prudent is Mr. Snowden, how careful of the State. I say there is no correspondence between this glossy surface and the turbulent currents that are flowing beneath. These leaders can never restrain their followers."

Ultimately these same Socialists would make a tremendous bid to secure an absolute majority and unfettered power. "They can place before the electorate a programme of bribes and doles the making good of which would ruin the credit of the State, but which would not have to be paid for till after it has been voted on."

Winston started out with a great initial handicap—he had no organization. He had to face three opponents, nominees of the parties, who had the advantage of long-established, efficient organizations. He had, however, the inestimable benefit to be gained from the London press—support from the major part and publicity from all of it, and publicity in an election campaign is almost as valuable as support. He had the backing, too, of an enthusiastic band of workers, and the aid of a number of Conservative M.P.s. James Rankin, Conservative Member for Toxteth, lent him his house to serve as headquarters. Ladies of Mayfair canvassed on Winston's behalf; the chorus-girls of Daly's sat up all night to despatch his election address.

One thing was lacking—a message endorsing his candidature from one of the leaders of Conservatism. His old friend, Arthur Balfour, now the eldest statesman in the party, and a member of the Upper House with the title of Earl, agreed to write a message of recommendation. He made it a condition that before publication Baldwin's consent, as leader of the party, should be obtained. The Conservative leader did not consider himself free to give his consent seeing that he had to recommend Captain Nicholson to the electorate. He did, however, permit himself to agree to publication of this vital Balfour note if any Conservative leader were to be found intervening on behalf of Captain Nicholson.

The Conservative leaders, however, were embarrassingly reticent. None was moved to enter the lists as champion of the Captain. Polling day drew near and the Balfour note was unpublished. Then, when it appeared that the message was to remain undisclosed, a letter was discovered in a newspaper in which Leo Amery gave it as his opinion that the Conservative cause would be strengthened if the Abbey electors returned Captain Nicholson. There was some uncertainty whether Mr. Amery came within the requirements of the Baldwin proviso—a leader of the party. Still, he was a member

of the Shadow Cabinet, and Conservatives hurried off to take Baldwin's opinion. They need not have been in doubt. Their leader, although it was then only breakfast-time, had already released the Balfour note. It was broadcast throughout the constituency and its publication permitted Austen Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead to range themselves beside their colleague of the Coalition.

Balfour, in his note, wrote as a private individual "untrammelled by administrative rules which when dealing with party organization every party leader must unswervingly follow." It was a neatly phrased suggestion that but for the rules, Baldwin might also have written expressing the personal hopes and wishes to which Balfour gave expression.

"These," he wrote, "are inevitably and I think rightly influenced by my strong desire to see you once more in the House of Commons, once more able to use your brilliant gifts in the public discussion of the vital problems with which the country is evidently confronted. On these you and many others who are associated with you think as we do. And where matters of great moment are in debate those who think alike should act together. Your absence from the House of Commons at such a time is to be deplored and since I believe that your convictions on fundamental questions, whether Imperial or social, are shared by the majority of the electors in the Abbey Division, your return for that historic seat would be warmly welcomed by men of moderate opinion throughout the country and by no one more than yours sincerely—BALFOUR."

Polling day found Winston confident of victory. The count was close and as the last packet of votes was carried to the table someone said : "You're in by a hundred." This news was actually telegraphed around the world, to be followed within a few moments by a correction. Winston was beaten by the narrow margin of 43 votes in a poll of 22,000. The figures were :

Captain Nicholson (Conservative)	.	.	.	.	.	8187
Rt. Hon. Winston S. Churchill (Constitutionalist)						8144
Fenner Brockway (Socialist)	.	.	.	.	.	6156
Scott Duckers (Liberal)	.	.	.	.	.	291

There was general regret that Winston had not won the day. This feeling was aptly expressed by the *Daily Telegraph*, the same journal that twenty years before had gloated over his reverse at Manchester. Now the leader-writer of Peterborough Court found it regrettable that Winston was 'out.'

"We had hoped," the *Daily Telegraph* observed, "Winston Churchill would win because he was incomparably the best man in the field, because his presence was badly required in the House of Commons where his debating force and volcanic energy would be

of the greatest value to the principal opposition.” Disappointed in this, the leader, in passing, turned a few acid phrases at the expense of the Asquithians whose poll was ‘derisory.’ The Liberal vote had in the main been split between the Socialist and the anti-Socialist; what was left was the mere drainings and leavings of Liberalism.

Winston was defeated but he had staged a magnificent comeback. Fortune, relenting, had begun to smile again. Winston could feel gratified that his conception of the union of anti-Socialist forces had received an endorsement.

A few months passed and, before the year had run its course, Parliament had been dissolved and another General Election was in progress—the third within two years. Winston was engaged upon his fourth campaign in a similar period and on this occasion he stood for a rural constituency, the West Essex, or Epping, division.

The Red Letter Election of 1924 was caused by the withdrawal of Liberal support from the MacDonald administration. The Liberals had tired of the role of patient oxen (in the Lloyd George phrase) pulling the Socialist car. Baldwin’s dry assurance that he did not envy his neighbour’s ox expressed the oxen’s own feelings. So when the decent pretext of the trade agreement with Russia, coupled with a £30,000,000 British credit, offered itself, the Liberals announced the withdrawal of their support. Actually the fatal vote was taken on the minor issue of the abandonment under Socialist back-bench pressure of the prosecution of a certain Mr. Campbell on a charge of sedition among the troops.

Ramsay MacDonald appealed to the country to free himself from the necessity for aid from the Asquithians. Winston’s prediction had come true sooner than he had himself imagined. Labour sought unfettered power. Labour’s opponents fought the campaign on the lines Winston had followed in the Abbey Division. The celebrated Red Letter facilitated their task.

To this day it has never been established whether Zinovieff, head of the Bolshevik Third International, wrote or did not write the letter attributed to his authorship calling on the British Communist Party to organize armed revolt in England. It was issued as a genuine document by MacDonald’s own department of the Foreign Office—and forgery or no forgery, he could not escape from its consequences.

There is no need to dwell on Winston’s campaign at Epping. He restated the case that he had so trenchantly set before the electors of Westminster. He was commended to West Essex by Lord Birkenhead as “the greatest House of Commons man now living.” Austen Chamberlain in a message of good wishes added the recommendation: “Your return as Constitutional candidate will be the first step in the decisive movement of public opinion. The old quarrels of Liberal and Conservative belong to the past.”

Winston won Epping in a canter, 6,000 votes ahead of the combined poll of his Liberal and Socialist opponents. The Conservatives were returned to power with the massive majority of 211 over all parties. The Liberals were almost extinguished, securing a paltry forty seats—a sorry reward for the patient oxen. Asquith himself went down at Paisley to a Labour nominee.

When Stanley Baldwin announced the constitution of his second administration the name of Winston Churchill was found to be included. This had been generally expected. But the office he received was that of Chancellor of the Exchequer—and that was anything but in accordance with expectation. The appointment was declared to be a courageous one for the Prime Minister to have made, not because of any doubt over Winston's adequacy for the post, but because it was notorious that he was not equally acceptable to all sections of the Conservative Party.

The general surprise was indicated by the story that went the rounds of the interview between the Premier and Winston. Summoned to receive the offer of a ministerial post, Winston heard the words—so at least it was related : “I can offer you the job of Chancellor,” to which he innocently inquired, “Of the Duchy?” “No,” Baldwin was made to say, “of the Exchequer.”

Winston's come-back had been magnificently achieved. He had returned to the Tory fold to receive the highest honour. The Chancellor of the Exchequer by custom is regarded as the prospective successor to the Premier. It is a post that could never have been his had Bonar Law still been alive. Under Bonar Law's leadership there would have been no future for Winston in the Conservative Party. Baldwin, however, unlike his predecessor, had a respect verging on admiration for his former colleague of the Lloyd George Coalition. Winston could respond to the mildly Liberal philosophy of the Conservative Prime Minister. And he could rejoice that he was reunited with his old Coalition colleagues—Austen Chamberlain, now Foreign Secretary, and Birkenhead, now Secretary for India.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Chancellor of the Exchequer*

WINSTON's five years as Chancellor of the Exchequer were five years of strenuous endeavour. He was engaged in one of the most arduous fights of his career—a fight against the economic consequences of his own policy.

His first considerable measure was to restore the Gold Standard. Thereby he determined the course of his Chancellorship—and much besides. It was as if he wound up a financial and economic clock-work machine, capable of producing effects throughout the whole fabric of our existence. Once set in motion it worked relentlessly. The man who had wound it could do nothing to control the consequences. All that was possible for him was to seek to alleviate the worst effects.

Five years in the toils of the Gold Standard—it was a hard fate even if it was of his own choosing. But why did he choose it? He chose it because it was predetermined for him. The City of London expected it; the Treasury experts recommended it; his predecessor in office, the Socialist Philip Snowden, had paved the way for it. There was no escape except by challenging financial orthodoxy—and for a Conservative Chancellor that would be worse than for a Bishop to repudiate the Thirty-nine Articles.

The question of the Gold Standard which faced Winston in 1925 was almost the last financial problem left over from the World War. Because of the war Britain had gone off gold. The value of the £ had fallen so that it was worth only 90 per cent of its value in 1914. That is to say that if you were spending a £ in the United States you would get 2/- less value for your money. The enactment which put Britain off gold set a limit to the term of the relaxation of the Gold Standard, and in 1925 that term had nearly run out. Either we had to go back on gold again at the pre-war parity or we had to let the world know that we intended to allow the £ to sink to a lower value.

Now Britain's prosperity in the world is founded upon two main planks—her credit and her export trade. London in pre-1914 days was the recognized financial centre of the world—a pre-eminence founded upon her credit. To the City of London it was essential that nothing should be done to undermine the credit on which that pre-eminence had been built. There must be no playing about with the Gold Standard. To maintain our credit the old-time value of the £ must be restored.

For our exporters the problem was not so simple. Even with the £ sterling at its lower level they were having difficulty in selling their goods in markets where competition was fierce and where they were being undercut by manufacturers in other countries. If the £ worth 18/- were suddenly to become worth 20/- then their difficulties would be intensified, for the customer abroad would have to pay 20/- for the same goods that had been costing him 18/-. In trades where competition was fiercest, the British exporter would only be able to continue his sales by reducing his price, and the corollary of this would be that his producing costs would have to be reduced by just that amount. Of the costs of pro-

duction the principal are the wages paid to the workpeople. So, for the export trades, return to the Gold Standard on the old parity of exchange meant that wages must be cut.

Of course, eventually, when all the consequential adjustments had taken place the workpeople would be no worse off, for though their wages would be lower their money would buy more. But until the new equilibrium had been reached, there would be industrial dislocation, labour disputes, strikes, and not a little suffering.

Were the benefits of returning to the old Gold Standard value of the £ so great as to outweigh the evil consequences that must follow? This was the problem that faced Churchill on becoming Chancellor. He took the advice of the Treasury Committee on Currency, and their advice was unequivocal. Their report contained a marshalling of the arguments which convinced him as Chancellor and convinced his colleagues in the Government.

Looking back, now, we may dissent from the reports of the experts. The parity to which the £ was restored in 1925 had to be abandoned in six years' time under the pressure of the world economic blizzard. Labour and industry, reflecting on the strains and stresses and hardships of the six years between, might well be disposed to question—like Sam Weller's charity boy reaching the end of the alphabet—whether it was worth while to go through so much to gain so little. In retrospect it is easy enough to say it was ill-advised, but Winston's contemporaries were not in a position to claim the luxury of criticizing him.

Financial experts and economists (with the notable exception of Professor Keynes) supported the decision. Among those who gave it their endorsement was Philip Snowden. Snowden, indeed, did move the Opposition amendment of criticism, declaring that while the decision was sound, the actual moment was inopportune, but that was no more than the discharge of the Opposition's duty to oppose.

Professor Keynes was clear-sighted enough to warn the Chancellor of the effects of his policy. He had made his reputation with *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*, and he now published a criticism of the gold policy under the title of *The Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill*. It was an exposure, and the author was able to pour scorn on the report of the Treasury experts—"vague and jejune meditations" was the phrase he applied to their arguments. In a passage of scintillating simplicity he set out what, in his view, they should have told the Chancellor. He wrote:

"Money-wages, the cost of living, and the prices which we are asking for our exports have not adjusted themselves to the improvement in the exchange, which the expectation of your restoring

the Gold Standard, in accordance with your repeated declarations, has already brought about. They are about 10 per cent too high. If, therefore, you fix the exchange at this gold parity, you must either gamble on a rise in gold prices abroad, which will induce foreigners to pay a higher gold price for our exports, or you are committing yourself to a policy of forcing down money wages and the cost of living to the necessary extent.

"We must warn you that this latter policy is not easy. It is certain to involve unemployment and industrial disputes. If, as some people think, real wages were already too high a year ago, that is all the worse, because the amount of the necessary wage reductions in terms of money will be all the greater.

"The gamble on a rise in gold prices abroad may quite likely succeed. But it is by no means certain, and you must be prepared for the other contingency. If you think that the advantages of the Gold Standard are so significant and so urgent that you are prepared to risk great unpopularity and to take stern administrative action in order to secure them, the course of events will probably be as follows :

"To begin with, there will be great depression in the export industries. This, in itself, will be helpful, since it will produce an atmosphere favourable to the reduction of wages. The cost of living will fall somewhat. This will be helpful too, because it will give you a good argument in favour of reducing wages. Nevertheless, the cost of living will not fall sufficiently and, consequently, the export industries will not be able to reduce their prices sufficiently, until wages have fallen in the sheltered industries. Now, wages will not fall in the sheltered industries, merely because there is unemployment in the unsheltered industries. Therefore, you will have to see to it that there is unemployment in the sheltered industries also.

"The way to do this will be by credit restriction. By means of the restriction of credit by the Bank of England, you can deliberately intensify unemployment to any required degree, until wages *do* fall. When the process is complete the cost of living will have fallen too ; and we shall then be, with luck, just where we were before we started.

"We ought to warn you, though perhaps this is going a little outside our proper sphere, that it will not be safe politically to admit that you are intensifying unemployment deliberately in order to reduce wages. Thus you will have to ascribe what is happening to every conceivable cause except the true one. We estimate that about two years may elapse before it will be safe for you to utter in public one single word of truth. By that time you will either be out of office, or the adjustment, somehow or other, will have been carried through."

The first to experience the worst consequences of the return to the old Gold Standard parity of the £ was the mining industry. Things were difficult enough for the coal-exporter beforehand, but afterwards coal could not be sold abroad unless prices were cut, and the coal owner saw no way of reducing prices but by lowering wages.

The miners said, "We strike if you do," and, what is more, they said, "If we strike, all our friends in other jobs, like the railwaymen and the transport people, they will strike, too." To put off the evil day of a strike all round, the Government gave the coal owners a subsidy to enable them to go on paying the old wage rates, and while the subsidy kept things going they held a long enquiry. This merely left the matter where it was before. The mine owners said it showed they could not pay and the miners said it proved the need for nationalization.

So the strike had to be, and the cynics said that it at least would prove who would starve first, the masters or the men. The Labour people thought that a General Strike, by making everybody starve together, would make it an easy win for the men. But that was a bad mistake because it antagonized the nation. Before then most people were very sorry for the miners, though they did not see what could be done about it. But when it was a General Strike they forgot about the miners, or at least nearly everybody did ; old Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, a very kindly, humane man—he was the predecessor of Archbishop Lang—was indiscreet enough to side with the miners.

When the Strike began Churchill threw himself whole-heartedly into the national cause, and organized the *British Gazette* as a daily newspaper to take the place of the newspapers that could not print properly because the printers had gone on strike. The owners of the *Morning Post* offered their plant and offices for the production of a Government news sheet. He occupied the editorial chair with gusto. I doubt if any editor can provide an equal to his increases in circulation. When it first appeared on 5 May some 230,000 copies of the *British Gazette* were circulated. On its final issue only eight days later the circulation was ten times larger.

The brevity of the *British Gazette's* existence did not save Churchill from the fate of all editors. His production was roundly accused of bias ; but the critics, as he quickly pointed out, overlooked the fact that the *British Gazette* was no ordinary journal. Its aim was avowedly propagandist.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the days that followed Mr. Churchill's political opponents took the *British Gazette* rather more seriously than he did. Some time after its disappearance, on an occasion quite unconnected with the General Strike, feelings were running high in the House. Winston was rebuking the Opposition amidst angry interruptions, when his manner suddenly became ominously threatening. The Government would not flinch. Let the Opposition take care or extreme measures would be used. "We will give you—yes, we will give you another—*British Gazette*!" Tension relaxed amidst laughter.

In due course the General Strike fizzled out and the miners' strike was starved out.

The miners' strike was one of the longest and most disastrous in the unhappy annals of British labour disputes. It involved colossal losses while the pits were idle, and even when work was re-started the tale of loss was not ended, for many consumers abroad who had gone for their supplies elsewhere did not renew their orders to British pits.

Churchill's difficulties at the Treasury were rendered the more difficult by this dislocation of industry. The restoration of trade, particularly of our trade abroad, and the reduction of unemployment were the main problems of the day. By the return to the Gold Standard our exporters were already handicapped. At all costs they must not be burdened by any additional taxation. In considering Churchill's administration as Chancellor the problem that beset him must be borne in mind ; it was how to find the money for various social schemes without calling on the taxpayer to pay more. His expedients were many and ingenious. They enabled him to solve the problems, but by their combined effect they gave him the appearance of being a Chancellor of brilliant improvisations rather than of sound and solid finance.

Over long periods Chancellor has followed Chancellor in unbroken line of blameless rectitude, and so little has occurred to distinguish one from another in the public eye that the names of many of them, worthy men in their day, are unknown outside the history books. How many people, for instance, could name the two first Chancellors of the present century, or indicate the period of office of the venerable Goschen ?

Churchill does not take his place in this line of Chancellors, but his reputation should not suffer thereby.

The main preoccupations in the public mind during his term as Chancellor were the need for economy in the nation's finances and the mounting cost of social services. There was in the background a murmur of Free Trade laments over the McKenna protective duties, and the minor excursions into tariffs carried out under the Safeguarding of Industries Act. The betting tax, with the bookmakers' strike which it occasioned, provided a fiscal diversion. Then in the final period there was much debate on the possibilities of the relief of unemployment by the carrying out at the public charge of vast schemes of public works.

Occupying the office which his father had resigned in an attempt to stem the ever-mounting tide of State spending, Churchill was in a position to raise the tattered flag of economy. But the old banner was no longer a standard that inspired men's faith. The world had been transformed since Lord Randolph left office. The war had revolutionized financial values. In 1885 the Chancellor

had been able to run the country by demanding £73,000,000 from the taxpayers. In 1925 he had to take £683,000,000.

It was not easy in 1925 to enforce economy. There were speeches enough advocating it, lip-service to an ideal, but when it came to translating pious hopes into administrative action it was found that the odium that must fall on the economizer was an effectual deterrent to action. By 1931 another £50,000,000 had been added to the taxpayer's annual burden, and it required the urgency of the world financial crisis to put the painful policy of economy into practice.

The statesman finds that the speeches of his opponents, no matter what may be his own vision, mark the limits of the politically expedient. As financier in chief to the Socialists, Snowden declared that he did not subscribe to the principles of national economy as understood and advocated by the party opposite. He elevated to the dignity of a national principle the spending of the people's money through the state and municipalities upon social services. We have learned since that Snowden the Socialist had at his party's behest to advocate policies which did not commend themselves to the wisdom of Snowden the political economist. But at that time his doubts were not allowed to appear to the public.

In his first Budget speech, Churchill expressed regret that time had been too short to permit of the comprehensive review of expenditure required to produce economies, but he permitted himself the forecast that £10,000,000 a year might be saved. During the ensuing debates he promised a searching inquiry into all branches of public spending by a Cabinet Committee under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. The results of this investigation were seen in an Economy Bill which was presented in 1926. Out of a total expenditure of roughly £800,000,000 a saving of less than £10,000,000 was to be made. And when the second Churchillian Budget was introduced, it was found that an actual increase on taxation was involved of £9,000,000. The Chancellor, in Sir Robert Horne's phrase, was faced with an expenditure which was "not only undiminished but seems to be undiminishable." Unfavourable comparisons might be drawn between the cost of running the State here and in Germany and the United States, but if our social services were to be kept at the level they had reached, then disparity was inevitable.

With the 1926 Economy Bill, Churchill gave up pursuit of the unattainable. The best he could do was to maintain expenditure at roughly the same level. Even this he was able to do only by resort to a variety of expedients, by raiding the Road Fund and gathering financial windfalls.

As a speaker Winston added to his reputation during his period at the Treasury. The sobering influence of finance did not dim his

wit but it added a deeper note of responsibility and authority. Oratorically his first Budget was a brilliant success. Sir Robert Horne, in epigrammatic phrase, assured him that he had demonstrated that figures need not be dull and that a Budget need not be drab. Snowden allowed that Churchill's rhetorical achievement must have given high satisfaction to Lord Randolph, "if the spirits of former occupants of the Treasury bench still hover round the scene of their earthly conflicts."

If Churchill's wit garnished his Budget speeches, his clashes with Snowden enlivened the debates. The encounters between the financial rivals were the best parliamentary duels of their time. Snowden would excel himself in acerbity. The Chancellor would find a devastating phrase as retort.

"Twelve months ago," said Snowden in 1926, "I described the Budget as a rich man's budget. To-day I describe this budget as the budget of a profligate and a bankrupt." "Parliamentary Billingsgate," said Winston in reply.

Snowden, assuming a tone of superiority, affected to look down on these rhetorical duels, but in truth the reputation they gained pleased him well enough. His satisfaction emerges from behind the mask of superiority he assumed in his reference to them in his Autobiography :

"It would be tiresome if I were to deal at length with the innumerable encounters between Mr. Churchill and myself in the Budget debates of this year and of succeeding years. As an Ex-Chancellor it fell to me to lead the Opposition in the Budget debates, and I found Mr. Churchill a foeman worthy of my steel. The debates between us became quite a Parliamentary entertainment. They were regarded as the best show in London. When it was expected that we should both be speaking, the public galleries were invariably crowded. After a time I ceased to take very much interest in these duels, but I was expected to play the Parliamentary game of opposition and to provide entertainment for my supporters.

"Mr. Churchill, during these years, gradually developed as a Parliamentary debater. He learnt to rely less on careful preparation of his speeches and more upon spontaneous effort. However much one may differ from Mr. Churchill, one is compelled to like him for his finer qualities. There is an attractiveness in everything he does. His high spirits are irrepressible. It was said of a French monarch that no one ever lost a kingdom with so much gaiety. Mr. Churchill was as happy facing a Budget deficit as in distributing a surplus. He is an adventurer, a soldier of fortune. An escapade has an irresistible fascination for him."

The McKenna duties were the fiscal shuttlecocks of the political battledore. Imposed during the last war by Mr. McKenna, a

Liberal free trader, to promote the home manufacture of motor cars and cycles, musical instruments, clocks and watches, and cinema films, they had been renewed in spite of the protests of free traders by Coalition and Conservative Chancellors. Then came the Socialists to office, and the McKenna duties were swept away. The Socialists went from office and the McKenna duties came up for judgement before Churchill, another Free Trader. His decision in his first Budget speech was epigrammatically announced. "To some," he said, "they are a relish, to others a target, and to me a revenue." Back the duties went. Five years later Snowden had returned to the Treasury and the McKenna duties were removed once more.

Five successive Budgets were opened by Winston. There is not much profit in recalling details of the melancholy achievements of the tax-extortioner-in-chief in bygone years, but the high lights of the Churchillian statements are still entertaining in retrospect.

*Budget the First* (28 April, 1925).—Apart from the decision to return to the Gold Standard, the principal announcement was the institution of pensions for widows. Relief was granted to super-tax payers and Income Tax was reduced from 4/6 to 4/-. Snowden called it the rich man's budget, but Sir Alfred Mond, as a rich man, thought it was robbing Peter to pay Paul, for though Income Tax was reduced by £20,000,000 to stimulate industry, £14,000,000 was taken back in contributions to pensions. Under the Safeguarding of Industries Act, a silk duty was imposed and a duty on lace.

*Budget the Second* (26 April, 1926).—Introduced under the shadow of the miners' strike and the impending General Strike, it contained no major announcements. The most controversial measures were the decisions to devote £7,000,000 from the revenue motorists contributed to the Road Fund to the purpose of general taxation (raiding the Road Fund) and the institution of a betting tax of 5 per cent on every stake made on a race-course or through a credit bookmaker. The latter provision was one of the most unpopular ever introduced by a Chancellor and resulted in the unexpected spectacle of a strike of bookmakers. The public bore this with the fortitude to be expected in a country inured to stoppages by the greater calamities of the miners' strike and the General Strike. Curiously enough, religious sentiment was for once ranged on the side of the bookmaker, not out of sympathy but as Snowden, expressing what he believed to be the sacred feelings of a vast number of people, explained—because the vice of betting was thereby accorded a respectability and prestige it did not possess. What a sight for the gods the Chancellor presented falling "between the angels who disapproved of betting and the devils who got their living from it."

*Budget the Third* (11 April, 1927).—The Chancellor thought himself fortunate, following the financial havoc brought by the General

Strike and the miners' strike, to be able to report that the revenue, though mauled and wounded, had survived the "shocking break-down in our island civilization." No major fiscal changes were announced, and the Chancellor gave a dexterous exhibition of meeting a prospective deficit of £35,000,000 by a variety of ingenious expedients which avoided the imposition of new taxation. A further raid on the Road Fund to the tune of £12,000,000 was the chief. Wines, motor tyres and tobacco were called upon to help the Chancellor bridge the "formidable precipice" of his prospective deficit.

*Budget the Fourth* (24 April, 1928).—The Chancellor allowed himself to survey the financial position in a spirit of restrained optimism—the future finance of the country was "freer of difficulty and stringency" than in any of his preceding Budgets. Only minor changes were announced—a new duty on British wines, a duty on mechanical lighters (to protect the revenue from matches) were the chief of the proposals that were estimated to make a difference of only £200,000 a year to Exchequer receipts. The principal announcement was that the rating system of the country was to be reformed. The object was to readjust rating burdens as between productive industries—which were unjustly burdened—and the distributing trades—which escaped their just dues. Relief was to be given by reducing the rates on all premises used for production and on freight-carrying railways, docks and canals. Agricultural land would be freed of the last remaining 25 per cent liability for rates. Local authorities were to receive Government aid under a new system of block grants. Exposition of this vast de-rating scheme involved the Chancellor in a speech of 3½ hours, and he was allowed the courtesy of a break of half-an-hour. The speech was admitted by Snowden to be a Parliamentary triumph, and it received the cordial congratulations of Lloyd George. The bill carrying out the de-rating plans was piloted through the House by Neville Chamberlain, Minister of Health. The Budget also dealt comprehensively with the fixed Debt Charge and a change in the method of presenting national accounts.

*Budget the Fifth and last* (15 April, 1929).—It was opened on the eve of the General Election to the imminence of which it was unashamedly correlated. The changes were very slight—repeal of the Betting duty which had been nullified by evasions, and the remission of the duty on tea, an impost which had furnished a subject for protests for a couple of centuries. In place of the Betting Tax, a licence duty of £10 on bookmakers was proposed, but the bookies escaped, for the Socialists came into office, and Snowden was financially too pure to tax vice. The Chancellor wound up with a survey of his administration at the Treasury. Since he had taken office, he claimed, savings by the smallest class of investor

had increased ; employment in the insured trades had gone up ; the cost of living index had decreased by eighteen points while money wages had remained almost exactly at the level of 1924 ; there had been a notable decline in the consumption of alcoholic liquor and a progressive diminution of drunkenness ; the consumption of working-class indulgences, motor bicycles, excursions and popular amusements, had shown a general increase ; and, further, the consumption of tea and sugar had reached record figures. Finally, the balance of trade had sensibly improved ; foreign investment, new capital issues for home investment, and bankers' deposits had all made steady growth since 1924.

He dwelt on the 'rewards' of returning to the Gold Standard, in making inflation impossible, in regaining for this country its position as the greatest international market and in its effects on the world-wide operation of credit and commerce on which nearly one-quarter of our population depended and for which the stability of sterling was essential. Not the least of the attractions of this policy for him had been the decline in the cost of living which it had brought about and which he calculated had been equivalent to a remission of indirect taxation of £160,000,000 a year by increasing the purchasing power of consumers.

In the brief Budget debates, curtailed by the dissolution, there was one last passage of arms between the Chancellor and his Socialist critic-in-chief. During a discussion of the War Debt settlement with Italy, Snowden disowned the Balfour Note. This statement had governed Britain's policy on War Debts and reparations in accordance with the pledge that we did not intend to take from our debtors more than we had to pay to our creditor, the United States.

In words spoken on the spur of the moment Snowden somewhat injudiciously declared : "We (Socialists) have never subscribed to the principle of the Balfour Note. I think that was an infamous Note." The Socialists would hold themselves open, if circumstances arose, to repudiate the conditions of that Note.

Churchill, seeing political possibilities in this threat in view of the imminence of the election, at once challenged Snowden on his statement. It was important, he declared, because the Note embodied the principle on which our agreements with France and Italy had recently been reached.

The matter was brought before the Cabinet the following morning and in the afternoon a Government statement was read to the House. It declared that Snowden's threat was a wanton and reckless act, capable, if it were credited abroad, of doing the utmost injury to British interests. Ramsay MacDonald, as Socialist leader, was invited to state if he endorsed the Snowden declaration and whether it constituted the official policy of the party. After an

unrepentant Snowden had reiterated his wanton threat, Churchill again attacked him.

MacDonald could not avoid making a statement, and his embarrassment was evident. He was placed in the dilemma of repudiating Snowden, or the debt settlements. His statement was a model of Parliamentary evasiveness ; amidst the welter of words, his meaning was, as he intended, as obscure as a mist on his native heaths.

Churchill pressed him for an explicit declaration, submitting categorical questions for his reply. MacDonald refused to be drawn. With a scornful gesture the Chancellor leaned across the table and exclaimed : "I commend to the attention of the country the fact that the Leader of the Labour Party and the ex-Prime Minister of the country is incapable of answering plain and simple questions. He sits there and does not open his mouth."

And there the incident ended for MacDonald did not unseal his lips. It was exciting while it lasted and Churchill exploited the situation to its utmost. But it must be confessed that this Snowden indiscretion was unproductive of any political consequences.

In the election that followed, the Conservatives elected to fight under the unattractive catchwords of tranquillity and safety first. The electors did not respond, and when the next House of Commons met, the Socialists were installed on the Treasury Bench and the member for Epping sat in opposition.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Out of Step*

THERE is a period of ten years between the time Winston vacated the Exchequer on the fall of the Baldwin Government in 1929 and his return to office as First Lord of the Admiralty, when the uneasy peace of the Years Between ended with the renewal of the war in September, 1939. Throughout the ten years he was following his own independent political line. The Baldwin Ministry had not long given way to the Socialists before he had begun to challenge the Conservative leadership. India was the immediate cause of the break.

On the face of things it appeared that he was seizing upon the India reforms as the means for attacking Baldwin and wresting the party leadership. There was the precedent of Disraeli's campaign against Peel over the Corn Laws a century ago. Appear-

ances suggested to the onlooker that Winston was leading a purely faction fight for which place and not principle was the motive force. One could not but compare his tactics with those of Dizzy, could not but note that Winston could not strike as effectively as Dizzy struck, could not aim such shafts as were discharged by that master of flouts and jeers. There were things, it appeared, to which Winston would not stoop in order to conquer.

As the campaign against the India Bill came to be viewed in perspective as the precursor to opposition to the policy of appeasement, the conception of Winston as leader of a faction fight was no longer tenable. His differences with the Conservatives on India were seen as the beginning of his revolt against the spirit of surrender that dominated ministries and people throughout the early 'Thirties.

Baldwin's mild Liberalism and Ramsay MacDonald's pacifism reflected the prevailing national mood. Winston's revolt was against the lack of decisiveness in the conduct of affairs. He pilloried MacDonald as the "boneless wonder of his age," and it was against the general bonelessness of the age that he revolted. With the aspirations of the Indian people he was in sympathy, but the policy of surrender was anathema to him whether it was surrender on India or surrender in Europe.

Never was Winston so out of sympathy with the mood of the people as during the early 'Thirties when Britain was gaining a reputation abroad for being decadent and effete. The swing of the pendulum in the decade after the war produced an intensely emotional yearning for international goodwill and the brotherhood of man. For the English people in those days the spirit of Locarno was a reality.

The harsher realities of the international slump accentuated the consequences of the pendulum's swing. The creed of disarmament was embraced under the impulse of idealistic yearnings. The economic blizzard and the state of the exchequer taught that what idealism recommended, the poverty of the National finances required. Disarmament was pressed with injudicious haste.

Pacifism and finance dictated our policy for a decade. The one sapped the will to forcefulness ; the other removed the means to be forceful. And across the North Sea the influences of the aftermath of war and the economic blizzard were combining to produce diametrically opposite results. The economic blizzard gave Britain the National Government. To Germany it gave Hitler and the Nazis. Appeasement was the prevailing spirit here ; there it was aggression.

Winston made the first revolt against bonelessness in the conduct of affairs and his was the first voice raised in warning against the menace of aggression abroad. Ministers who neglected the Empire to defend the old school tie, were not to be impelled into forcefulness by the mere whip of words. Forcelessness had been

elevated into the dignity of a national principle. The days of the Ministry satirically termed of heroic measures had come again, for Ministers verily could be seen "keeping their heroism for the Home Office but never allowing it to transgress the threshold of the Foreign Office."

Neither Baldwin nor MacDonald, twin Leaders of the National Ministries, was likely to have picked Winston for the political team. Baldwin, who had rejected Lloyd George as a "dynamic force," once protested against Winston's hundred-horse-power brain. It was a plaintive jest. It may be suspected that the gentle Unionist suffered some embarrassment from the impact of that force and in shrinking from further contact he may well have been supported by MacDonald's positive antagonism. Winston's attacks on the Socialist leader were sustained and coruscating.

Members who were privileged to be present will never forget the speech in which he taunted Ramsay for his bonelessness. It is one of the brightest of the quips and gibes with which Winston enlivened the dreariness of debate and which reward the patient explorer in the pages of Hansard.

When Winston, the parliamentary impresario, introduced his boneless wonder, the piece on the political stage was known by the unlively title of the "Trades Disputes and Trades Union Amendment Bill." At that date—28 January, 1931—Ramsay and his Socialist Government were in office, maintained by the votes of Lloyd George and the Liberals. The Amendment Bill had been introduced to remove some of the restrictions imposed on Trade Unions after the 1926 General Strike.

It was a delicate matter for the Liberals. If they opposed the Bill they would turn the Socialists from office: if they supported it they would seem to be condoning oppressive Trade Union practices. After much searching of heart they decided on equivocal support. This was announced in the debate by Norman Birkett (later Mr. Justice Birkett). MacDonald stated that the Committee stage of the measure would be taken not on the floor of the House but in the greater seclusion of the Committee Room upstairs.

Winston denounced this procedure as a Parliamentary disgrace, and he passed on to reproach Lloyd George and the Liberals for not safeguarding Parliamentary procedure and the means by which discussion in public should be assured for questions arousing public feeling.

"Mr. Lloyd George," he proceeded. "told us the other day on a question of the same kind, on another measure, what were his doctrines on procedure. They were very remarkable. They were expressed with his usual candour. It all depends on these questions of procedure whether you like the Bill or not.

"If you like the Bill—I am not quoting him any more—then, of course, away with Parliamentary forms and cumbersome debate, slap it through by the quickest and most expeditious method possible. If you do not like it, then out will come all the constitutional arguments about the rights of Parliament and the interests of minorities of which the Liberal Party have always been the champions. Then will be the time for the peroration about 'the cause for which Hampden died on the field and Sidney on the scaffold.' These are the ethics of Parliamentary procedure as expounded by the Leader of the Liberal Party.

"I must ask a further question. How do you decide whether you like it or not? No one can deny that Mr. Lloyd George and the Party which he leads take infinite pains in coming to a decision whether they like or whether they dislike any particular measure. Although we are not permitted to take part in these discussions, the House has resounded with the echoes of their conclaves and perturbations. Once they have decided to like a Bill that is the end of Parliamentary procedure so far as the minority in the House of Commons is concerned.

"But in this case the Liberal Party and their leader seemed to have very great difficulty in deciding whether they liked or disliked the Bill, so they came to a compromise by agreeing, so far as I can make it out, not to dislike it too much here, but to hate it like poison hereafter. Mr. Birkett was deputed to explain what was to be done to the Bill. The execution is to be in private and it is to be ruthless. After I had listened to his account, which is fresh in the minds of those who have followed these debates, I could not see that anything was left of the Bill except possibly the Title. That is what they have decided on.

"What are the Government, and the Labour Party, going to do about it? What is the Prime Minister going to do about it?

"I spoke the other day, after he had been defeated in an important division, about his wonderful skill in falling without hurting himself. He falls, but up he comes again, smiling, a little dishevelled but still smiling. But this is a juncture, a situation which will try to the very fullest the particular arts in which he excels.

"I remember when I was a child being taken to the celebrated Barnum's Circus which contained an exhibition of freaks and monstrosities, but the exhibit on the programme which I most desired to see was the one described as 'The Boneless Wonder.' My parents judged that the spectacle would be too revolting and demoralizing for my youthful eyes, and I have waited 50 years to see the Boneless Wonder sitting on the Treasury Bench.

"We have made our protest against the Bill. We have made our protest also against the procedure for which the Liberal Party bear a keen responsibility, but it seems to me that the real grievance

lies with the Trades Unions. They seem to me, after all has been said and done, the parties who are being deceived in this matter.

"I was not invited to the Conference which took place last week in Downing Street between the Prime Minister and the leader of the Liberal Party, but my Hon. Friend the member for Treorchy gave me a shrewd account of the interview between the two party leaders.

"After the usual compliments, the Prime Minister said, 'We have never been colleagues, we have never been friends—not what you would call holiday friends, but we have both been Prime Ministers and dog don't eat dog. Just look at the monstrous bill the Trade Unions and our wild fellows have foisted on me. Do me a favour and I will never forget it. Take it upstairs and cut its dirty throat.'"

It is not to be imagined that Ramsay MacDonald would have welcomed Winston as a Cabinet colleague.

It was a couple of days after the Boneless Wonder speech that Winston disclosed that differences had developed between himself and Baldwin over India and that, as a consequence, he was withdrawing from the Conservative Shadow Cabinet. The split was most amicably arranged. Winston wrote to his leader regretting that sincere and inevitable differences had developed; expressing the hope that the friendship of the last six years would not be impaired thereby, and conveying the assurance that he would on all other matters continue to co-operate with the party in the defeat of the Socialists. His leader, equally regretting the divergence, did not consider that there was anything in a difference of opinion "on a single policy, however important," to prevent close and loyal co-operation in future. "Our friendship," he added, "is now too deeply rooted to be affected by differences of opinion whether temporary or permanent."

Winston had embarked on a long campaign. He came to assume the leadership of the right-wing or Diehard group of the party, and the persistency of his challenge to Baldwin's leadership must have placed a severe strain on their friendship. It was the anti-Brodrick campaign of twenty-five years before repeated and intensified, but this time he fought in vain.

A volume the size of this book would not suffice to record all the speeches he made. Many were devoted to technical points which require for their appreciation detailed examination of the processes of the long-drawn-out procedure—the Simon Commission, the Round Table Conference, the White Paper embodying the Government proposals and the Joint Committee of Lords and Commons. There is an illuminating example, here, of the business of Empire administration and constitution-making, but it scarcely comes within the scope of this biography.

Winston's main position can be briefly stated. He was not opposed to the extension of the participation of Indians in their own government. His opposition was to the sudden step of Dominion Status and Federal Government. He based himself on the Simon Commission's report, claiming that Dominion Status found no mention there. He protested against surrendering India to Gandhi. Than this, he asked, what spectacle could be more sorrowful. From the address he delivered to a demonstration at the Albert Hall on 18 March, 1931, I make the following extracts, to convey the main burden of an argument that was developed in a score of speeches :

"What spectacle could be more sorrowful than that of this powerful country casting away with both hands, and up till now almost by general acquiescence, the great inheritance which centuries have gathered? What spectacle could be more strange, more monstrous in its perversity, than to see the Viceroy (Lord Irwin) and the high officials and agents of the Crown in India labouring with all their influence and authority to unite and weave together into a confederacy all the forces adverse and hostile to our rule in India? One after another our friends and the elements on which we ought to rely in India are chilled, baffled and dismissed, and finally even encouraged to band themselves together with those who wish to drive us out of the country.

"It is a hideous act of self-mutilation, astounding to every nation of the world. The Princes, the Europeans, the Moslems, the Depressed classes, the Anglo-Indians—none of them know what to do nor where to turn in the face of their apparent desertion by Great Britain. Can you wonder that they try in desperation to make what terms are possible with the triumphant Brahmin oligarchy?

"I am against this surrender to Gandhi. I am against these conversations and agreements between Lord Irwin and Mr. Gandhi. Gandhi stands for the expulsion of Britain from India. Gandhi stands for the permanent exclusion of British trade from India. Gandhi stands for the substitution of Brahmin domination for British rule in India. You will never be able to come to terms with Gandhi.

"If at the sacrifice of every British interest and of all the necessary safeguards and means of preserving peace and progress in India, you come to terms with Gandhi, Gandhi would at that self-same moment cease to count any more in the Indian situation. Already Nehru, his young rival in the Indian Congress, is preparing to supersede him the moment that he has squeezed his last drop from the British lemon. In running after Gandhi and trying to build on Gandhi, in imagining that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Gandhi and Lord Irwin are going to bestow peace and pro-

gress upon India, we should be committing ourselves to a crazy dream, with a terrible awakening.

"No! Come back from these perilous paths while time and strength remain. Study the report of your own Statutory Commission headed by Sir John Simon and signed unanimously by the representatives of all the three parties in the State. Let us take that as our starting-point for any extensions we may make of self-government in India.

"I repudiate the calumny which our opponents level at us that we have no policy but repression and force. Do not be deceived by these untruths.

"We take our stand upon views almost universally accepted until a few months ago. We believe that the next forward step is the development of Indian responsibility in the provincial governments of India. Efforts should be made to make them more truly representative of the real needs of the people. Indians should be given ample opportunity to try their hand at government in the provinces; and meanwhile the central Imperial executive, which is the sole guarantee of impartiality between races, creeds and classes, should preserve its sovereign power intact, and allow no derogation from its responsibility to Parliament.

"Is that Diehardism? That is the message of the Simon report, unanimously signed by the representatives of the three parties. That is the purport of the alternative scheme submitted a few months ago by the Viceroy himself.

"After all, it opens immediately an immense and fertile field for Indian self-government. The provinces of India are great states and separate nations comparable in magnitude and in numbers with the leading powers of Europe. The responsible government of territories and populations as large as Germany, France, Poland, Italy, or Spain is not a task unworthy of Indian capacity for self-government, so far as it has yet been displayed.

"It is a task the successful discharge of which would certainly not conflict with the ultimate creation of a federal system. On the contrary it is the indispensable preliminary without which no federation, desirable or undesirable, is possible. Why, the very word 'federal' signifies a *foedus*, or treaty made between hitherto sovereign or autonomous states. All federations have arisen thus. In the United States of America, in Canada, in Australia, in South Africa, in every case the units have first been created. Why should these unpractised, unproved, unrepresentative, self-chosen groups of Indian politicians disdain the immense possibilities offered within the limits of the Statutory Commission's report, and demand an immediate setting up of an United States of India, with themselves in control, and the British army at their orders?

"Before a Federal system for India could be set up there must

be first the self-governing constituent provinces ; and secondly, far greater, more real, more representative contact between the Indian political classes and the vast proletariat they aspire to rule. Even Europe cannot achieve such a united organization. But what would be said of a scheme which handed the federal government of the United States of Europe over to political classes proportionately no larger than the inhabitants of Portugal, and no more representative of the needs and passions of a mighty continent than the inhabitants of a single city like Rome ? Such are the follies we are forced to expose. We therefore resist upon the highest experience and authority the hysterical megalomania of the Round Table Conference.

"In India far more than in any other community in the world moral, political and economic considerations are outweighed by the importance of technical and administrative apparatus. Here you have nearly three hundred and fifty millions of people, lifted to a civilization and to a level of peace, order, sanitation and progress far above anything they could possibly have achieved themselves or could maintain. This wonderful fact is due to the guidance and authority of a few thousands of British officials responsible to Parliament who have for generations presided over the development of India. If that authority is injured or destroyed, the whole efficiency of the services, defensive, administrative, medical, hygienic, judicial ; railway, irrigation, public works and famine prevention, upon which the Indian masses depend for their culture and progress, will perish with it. India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages.

"To abandon India to the rule of the Brahmins would be an act of cruel and wicked negligence. It would shame for ever those who bore its guilt. These Brahmins who mouth and patter the principles of Western Liberalism, and pose as philosophic and democratic politicians, are the same Brahmins who deny the primary rights of existence to nearly sixty millions of their own fellow countrymen whom they call 'untouchable,' and whom they have by thousands of years of oppression actually taught to accept this sad position.

"Side by side with this Brahmin theocracy and the immense Hindu population—angelic and untouchable castes alike—there dwell in India seventy millions of Moslems, a race of far greater physical vigour and fierceness, armed with a religion which lends itself only too readily to war and conquest. While the Hindu elaborates his argument, the Moslem sharpens his sword. Between these two races and creeds, containing as they do so many gifted and charming beings in all the glory of youth, there is no intermarriage. The gulf is impassable. Over both of them the impartial rule of Britain has hitherto lifted its appeasing sceptre. Until the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms began to raise the question of

local sovereignty and domination, they had got used to dwelling side by side in comparative toleration. But step by step, as it is believed we are going to clear out or be thrust out of India, so this tremendous rivalry and hatred of races springs into life again. It is becoming more acute every day.

"Were we to wash our hands of all responsibility and divest ourselves of all our powers, as our sentimentalists desire, ferocious civil wars would speedily break out between the Moslems and the Hindus. No one who knows India will dispute this.

"But that is not the end. The Brahmins know well that they cannot defend themselves against the Moslems. The Hindus do not possess among their many virtues that of being a fighting race. The whole south of India is peopled with races deserving all earnest solicitude and regard, but incapable of self-defence. It is in the north alone that the fighting races dwell.

"There can be no doubt that the departure of the British from India, which Mr. Gandhi advocates, and which Mr. Nehru demands, would be followed first by a struggle in the North and thereafter by a reconquest of the South by the North, and of the Hindus by the Moslems.

"This danger has not escaped the crafty foresight of the Brahmins. It is for that reason that they wish to have the control of a British Army, or failing that, a white army of janissaries officered, as Mr. Gandhi has suggested, by Germans or other Europeans. They wish to have an effective foreign army, or foreign-organized army, in order to preserve their dominance over the Moslems and their tyranny over their own untouchables. There is the open plot of which we are in danger of becoming the dupes, and the luckless millions of Indians the victims.

"It is our duty to guard those millions from that fate. It will be a sorry day when the arm of Britain can no longer offer them the protection of an equal law.

"There is a more squalid aspect. Hitherto for generations it has been the British policy that no white official should have any interest or profit other than his salary and pension out of Indian administration. All concession hunters and European adventurers, company-promoters and profit-seekers have been rigorously barred and banned. But now that there is spread through India the belief that we are a broken, bankrupt, played-out power, and that our rule is going to pass away and be transferred to the Brahmin sect, all sorts of greedy appetites have been excited, and many itching fingers are stretching and scratching at the vast pillage of a derelict Empire.

"I read in *The Times* newspaper only last week of the crowd of rich Bombay merchants and millionaire millowners, millionaires on sweated labour, who surround Mr. Gandhi, the saint, the lawyer,

Lord Irwin's dear colleague and companion. What are they doing there, these men, and what is he doing in their houses? They are making arrangements that the greatest bluff, the greatest humbug and the greatest betrayal shall be followed by the greatest ramp. Nepotism, back-scratching, graft and corruption in every form will be the handmaidens of a Brahmin domination.

"Far rather would I see every Englishman quit the country, every soldier, every civil servant embark at Bombay, than that we should remain clutching on to the control of foreign relations and begging for trading facilities, while all the time we were the mere cloak of dishonour and oppression."

Winston's campaign allied him with men it was strange for a former member of the Liberal Party to be working with, the Diehards of Conservatism, the section to which his own chief critics in former years had belonged. It estranged him from his former friends. It even involved him in levelling a charge against the Earl of Derby—a charge that was referred to the judgment of the Committee of Privileges of the House of Commons. The Committee reported that Lord Derby and Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary for India, who was also involved, had committed no breach of privilege as Winston alleged, by seeking to influence Lancashire evidence. Winston retorted on the report that the Committee, to avoid declaring that a breach of the law had been committed, had proclaimed a new reading of the law. It was a lively if inconclusive interlude.

After months of argument, the India Bill was at length passed through the Commons. In a final speech of denunciation Winston recapitulated all his forewarnings of Imperial disaster. The effect was rather spoiled by Mr. Amery, who followed him in debate.

Leo Amery was at Harrow in Winston's time, and Winston once had the temerity to push him in the water by a sudden and unprovoked assault. Young Amery did not exact immediate chastisement, but he had perhaps been saving it up. When Winston had brought to a close his prophecy of woe on India, Leo Amery rose and said, "Here endeth the last chapter of the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah."

When the struggle on the India Bill began, the Socialists were in office. Before it was ended the political scene had been transformed. Under the pressure of the economic blizzard the Socialist Government passed from the scene. A National Government was formed under Ramsay MacDonald with Baldwin taking the second place and the Liberals coming in as well. Winston did not miss the opportunity to recall that one of the destroyers of the Coalition in 1922 had now taken a prominent part in coalition promoting.

"During the years," he said, "when I worked so closely with the Rt. Hon. gentleman—we were then almost 'a pair of brothers working together'—I always was alert to catch his inspirations and

to profit by the sterling qualities for which he is renowned. If there was one doctrine which he inculcated in me more than any other it was his hatred of coalitions. Why, he even spoke in public rebuking some of the younger members of this House, warning them of the dangers of hunting with other packs besides their own ; and therefore it is certainly surprising now to find him the champion coalitionist, though doubtless for a very good reason. I am sure no one is more aware of the danger of such a course than my right honourable friend, and I am sure he will be reminded of those dangers whenever he should chance to walk across the portals of the Carlton Club."

Winston wanted to know whether the new Coalition was to be "above party government or below party government." For himself he had abandoned his old allegiance to Free Trade and he believed that the country was only too ready for protection.

Baldwin, in his reply, remarked that the fact that he was once more in a coalition was but an instance of the irony of history—"that irony as I have experienced it will prevent me from ever making another political prophecy." As to protection, he recalled Winston's vehemence in past debates in the defence of Free Trade and expressed satisfaction that he had at length returned to his original faith in protection. "That explains to me," he added, "once and for all the words of the hymn :

*In the morn those angel faces smile  
Which I have loved long since and lost awhile.*"

The National Government had taken office to deal with the particular financial crisis of 1931 ; having coalesced, its constituents did not find the occasion for separating. Baldwin replaced MacDonald, Neville Chamberlain succeeded Baldwin, the National Government persisted. Full-blooded protection replaced Free Trade, some Liberals dissenting and some resigning. Hitler came to power in Germany ; disarmament became the international preoccupation.

Then began the series of speeches on our weakness and the growing strength of Germany which were Winston's contribution to affairs over a space of seven years. Through a succession of international crises—the Abyssinian war, reoccupation of the Rhineland, invasion of Austria, War in Spain, Munich—his voice was heard counselling, urging, pleading, persuading in unvarying, insistent advocacy of the same cause—the need for Britain to awake to her peril and to rearm herself. They have said he is inconsistent, that he has no principles. Throughout those seven years he gave a remarkable display of principle and consistency.

It was by these speeches, backed by his record in the last war, that he came to stand out as the man to undertake the conduct of

the struggle against Hitler. To understand the means by which he reached this dominating position, we must trace the sequence of those pronouncements.

In 1932, before the Nazis had seized control in Germany, he delivered what good judges described as one of the greatest speeches he had ever made, in which he advocated the solution of the problems of Europe by removing the grievances of the vanquished in the last war as a preliminary to the disarmament of the victors.

"The bringing about of anything like equality of armament while grievances are unredressed," he declared, "will appoint the day for another European war. It is far safer to reopen questions like Danzig, the Corridor and Transylvania with all their delicacies and difficulties in cold blood and in a calm atmosphere while the victor nations still have ample superiority. It is far better to do this than to drift from stage to stage until once again vast combinations equally matched confront each other face to face. Great Britain will run far less risk in pressing for the redress of grievances than in pressing for disarmament. The road of pressing for disarmament leads us deeper into the European situation. The removal of grievances removes the cause of danger or leads us out of danger itself."

In a prophetic passage he dealt with German aspirations. The Germans had recently been freed from the burden of reparations. What would be the consequence?

"I have the greatest respect and admiration for the Germans and the greatest desire that we should live on terms of goodwill and fruitful relations with them. But I put it to the House that every concession that has been made—and many have been made, and will be made, and ought to be made—has been followed immediately by a fresh demand.

"Now the demand is that Germany should be allowed to rearm. Do not let us delude ourselves. Do not let the Government delude themselves by supposing that which Germany is asking for is equal status. All those bands of splendid Teutonic youth marching to and fro in Germany with the light of desire to suffer for their Fatherland in their eyes, they are not looking for status. They are looking for weapons, and when they have the weapons, believe me, they will then ask for the restoration of lost territories and lost colonies, and when the demand is made it cannot fail to shake, and possibly shake to their foundations, every country in the world."

It was wise advice to follow, but British ministers seemed to be guided by the opposite principles. They neither pursued a decisive policy of conciliation and removed the grievances of the Germans, nor did they maintain our strength at a pitch which would have made aggression unprofitable.

By 1934 the Austrian painter had come to power in Germany

and at home Winston saw a people never so defenceless. In the days of the previous Baldwin Government it was a rule of guidance that there could be no major war within ten years in which we could be involved. The same could not be said in 1934.<sup>1</sup>

In the House, in February, to focus attention on our weakness, he moved an amendment to the Address, representing that "In the present circumstances of the world the strength of our defences, and especially of our air defences, is no longer adequate to secure the peace, safety and freedom of Your Majesty's faithful subjects." He backed his amendment with a grave warning on Germany's rearmament, particularly in the air.

"I do not believe that war is imminent or inevitable," he said, "but it seems difficult to resist the conclusion that if we do not begin forthwith to put ourselves in a position of security it will soon be beyond our power to do so. Germany is re-arming. She has now equipped herself again with the practical apparatus of modern war and is instilling into the hearts of her youth and manhood the most extreme nationalism and militaristic conception."

"What concerns us most," Winston proceeded, "is the re-armament of Germany in the air. Our danger from air attack is formidable. The most dangerous form is attack by incendiary bomb. Since 1918 the incendiary bomb has become much more powerful, and is now capable of going through a series of floors igniting each one simultaneously."

It must not be assumed that the danger of air attack would be confined to London. The industrial cities and areas would be equally open to attack, and unless precautions were taken the bombing of oil fuel stores and dockyards might paralyse the Fleet. Actual conquest and subjugation might confront us.

"It is well," Mr. Churchill added, "to confront these facts while time remains to take proper measures to cope with them. It is not of much use planning to move our arsenals to the western side of the island when one considers the enormous range and great speed of aeroplanes. The flying peril is not a peril from which one can fly. It is necessary to face it where we stand."

Pending some new discovery, the only practical measure of defence open to us on a great scale was the certainty of being able to inflict great damage simultaneously on an enemy.

"Do not let us undervalue this procedure—it may in practice prove capable of giving us complete immunity. If two Powers show themselves equally capable of inflicting damage to each other by some process of war so that neither gains an advantage and both

<sup>1</sup> In this year Mr. Churchill lunched with the Cabinet to meet von Ribbentrop, and to the late Lord Wedgwood he suggested a reason for the rather unexpected invitation : "Well, I suppose they asked me to show him that if they couldn't bark themselves they kept a dog who could bark and might bite."

suffer the same reciprocal injuries, it seems improbable that either would employ that means. Certainly, a Continental country like the one I have spoken of, with large armies on its frontiers, would be most unwise to expose itself to the risk of a bombing attack from this island, upon its munition centres and lines of communications at a time when it was liable to be engaged by the army of another first-class Power.

"If we maintain in the future an air force sufficient to enable us to inflict as much damage on the most likely potential aggressor as he can inflict on us, that may shield our people for all time from the horrors I have described. If that be so, what are £100,000,000 sterling raised by tax or loan compared with immunity like that? Never has there been so fertile and blessed an insurance to be secured so cheaply.

"We ought to decide now to maintain at all costs in the next ten years an air force substantially stronger than that of Germany, and it should be considered a high crime against the state if, whatever Government is in power, that force should fall substantially below, even for a month, the potential force that may be possessed by that country abroad."

What had been intended in the Treaty of Versailles for a safeguard for the Allies had only become a cloak and a mask for the potential aggressor. If she had been in the same position as other countries the facts about her air developments would have been stated promptly. Naturally if the Foreign Secretary said that Germany had armed contrary to the Versailles Treaty he would have to stand by the statement that he was charging a great Power with a breach of the Treaty. It was necessary for the Government to proceed with great caution.

"But the time has come," Winston declared, and his statement was loudly cheered, "when the mystery surrounding German armaments must be cleared up. We must know where we are. The House cannot divest itself of the responsibility for the safety of the country and must satisfy itself that proper measures are being taken.

"I therefore assert first that Germany already at this moment has a military air force—that is to say, a military squadron—with the necessary ground services and reserves and material, that only await an order to assemble in full, open combination, and this is rapidly approaching equality with our own.

"By this time next year, if Germany and ourselves execute the existing programmes, the German military air force will at least be as strong as our own, it may even be stronger. On the same basis, by the end of 1936 the German military air force will be nearly 50 per cent stronger, and in 1937 it will be nearly double.

"Germany has already between 200 and 300 machines with a

speed of between 220 and 230 miles an hour, which are now ostensibly or actually employed in carrying mail bags and to some extent in carrying passengers. Those machines can be converted into long-distance bombers of the highest efficiency in a few hours. Our civil aviation is valueless for war purposes. Everyone knows that we have built for comfort and speed and without the slightest contemplation of convertability."

He understood that why so little had been done at home was because the Government shrank from frightening the population. "I think," he added, "it is better to be frightened now than killed hereafter. It is much better to be frightened before the danger happens than be killed when the danger actually comes to pass."

The Prime Minister, speaking in the debate, challenged Winston's assertions, declaring that the figures of German aircraft were grossly exaggerated. "It is not the case," he assured the House, "that Germany is rapidly approaching equality with us. Her real strength is not 50 per cent of our strength in Europe to-day. As for the position this time next year, so far from the German military air force being at least as strong as and probably stronger than our own, we estimate that we shall still have in Europe a margin—in Europe alone—of nearly 50 per cent."

In Berlin they must have smiled to themselves at the investigations which had led the British Prime Minister to these conclusions. Six months later Baldwin had become better informed. "Where I was wrong," he said in a frank confession, "was in my estimate of the future. There I was completely wrong. Neither I nor any advisers from whom we could get accurate information had any idea of the exact rate at which production could be and actually was being speeded up in Germany in the six months between then and now. We were completely misled on the subject."

Winston thus found his justification, but he had grown by now accustomed to being told that he was wrong while having the consciousness that the other man was wrong and he was right. Lord Londonderry had cause to feel aggrieved at the terms of Baldwin's confession. Londonderry was Air Minister at the time, and when he resigned office a few months later he felt it necessary to justify himself against the implied censure. "Mr. Baldwin," he observed, "never was misled. He was continually being informed by me not only of the German re-armament in the air, but of the approximate rate of that re-armament."

In 1935 Mussolini embarked upon his adventure in Abyssinia. Winston, addressing members of the City of London Carlton Club (September 26) warned the Italian Dictator of the peril to which he was exposing himself; it was the "hostages to fortune" speech.

"I speak," he said, "as a proved friend of Italy and I must express surprise that so great a man and so wise a ruler as Mussolini should

be so willing and even eager to put his gallant nation into such an uncomfortable military and financial position.

"To cast an army of nearly a quarter of a million men, embodying the flower of Italian manhood, upon a barren shore 2,000 miles from home, against the goodwill of the whole world and without the command of the sea, and then in his position to embark upon what might well be a series of campaigns against a people and in regions which no conqueror in 4,000 years has ever thought it worth while to subdue—that is to give hostages to fortune in a manner like nothing in history.

"Let it be observed that these conditions of entanglement, of vulnerability, of holding the dumb-bell at arm's length, are not risks that have to be run for only a few short weeks. Unless Italy accepts the good offices of the League and defers to its decisions they may continue even for years.

"The day may come when Italy will be grateful to old friends like Great Britain for keeping her out of what may be a deadly trap. There are some Powers which might like to see Italy getting into a compromising and dependent position. We are quite different."

In the autumn of 1935, Baldwin appealed to the country. The Government was returned with a majority of 242. The fiasco of sanctions followed—sanctions applied half-heartedly, never with sufficient vigour to save Abyssinia. Before the final collapse of the Abyssinians, the world was startled and shocked by the Hoare-Laval plan for the dismemberment of the Abyssinian Empire. British opinion revolted, Samuel Hoare left the Foreign Office, but Abyssinia was not saved.

This policy of half-hearted dabbling roused Winston to emphatic protest against the foolish, unfair, dangerous course which the Government pursued. Addressing his constituents at Chingford (8 May, 1936), he said :

"No one is compelled to serve great causes unless he feels fit for it, but nothing is more certain than that you cannot take the lead in great causes as a half-timer. Mr. Baldwin said two years ago that sanctions meant war. Then he led us into sanctions with a thoroughly virtuous resolve against war. What was the result ? The economic sanctions had to be confined within limits which would not lead to war.

"As far as I can make out, Signor Mussolini let it be known that he would submit to any economic sanctions which merely inflicted privations upon the Italian people. He would not submit to any economic sanction which prevented him from conquering Abyssinia. He would treat an economic sanction which had the effect of crippling his aggressive armies as if it were a military sanction—that is to say, an act of war.

"It also seems to me that the League of Nations submitted to

this position from the outset. If you examine the sanctions which the League of Nations, under our leadership, imposed upon Italy, you will see that they all conform to this condition.

"For instance, the import of aluminium into Italy was prohibited. But that happened to be almost the only metal of which Italy has a larger domestic supply than she requires. Again, the import of iron ore or scrap iron into Italy was forbidden. But as they were allowed to import as much pig iron or steel as they wanted, it made no difference at all to them.

"If oil sanctions had been imposed at the outset, or even in November, it might have produced a fatal effect upon the operations of the Italian armies. But that might have led to war.

"Now if our leaders had definitely decided that they would not go into war to stop Mussolini conquering Abyssinia, it seems to me that they ought to have sung a very much smaller tune.

"The conclusion which I think we should draw is that we should be scrupulously careful not to involve the word and honour of Britain upon the Continent of Europe in any business which we are not prepared, if the worst comes to the worst, to carry through, whatever the cost, with all our force and strength.

"I have tried to support the Government and Mr. Baldwin in their policy upon the League of Nations and about Abyssinia. I found it very difficult to keep in step with all their zigzags.

"First, we had Mr. Baldwin's statement, 'Sanctions mean war.' Then we had the policy of sanctions without war. Then the sudden reinforcement of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean. Then came Sir Samuel Hoare's magnificent speech at Geneva, which was heard and hailed as a trumpet call to the world.

"There followed a moment in which it seemed as if that war might come and that we must be attacked. At that moment it was the duty of everyone to rally to the national cause. The Labour Party and the Trade Unions rallied. They turned Mr. Lansbury out of their Labour leadership for his pacifism. They became seriously divided among themselves. They suffered at the General Election because of their divisions.

"No one could deny that this support of valiant idealism played a great part in the votes that were given by so many millions of our people. But what followed? All of a sudden, over a week-end, we were confronted with the agreement between Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval to give Italy a large part of Abyssinia. Everyone can see now that this agreement was a very shrewd, far-seeing agreement, which would have saved the Emperor of Abyssinia from ruin before his army was destroyed. The serious thing against it was that it should have been made by the same Sir Samuel Hoare who had sounded his wonderful trumpet-call to the League of Nations scarcely three months before.

"It was this violent revolution of policy, however sagacious in itself, which threw Parliament into confusion before Christmas.

"But no one did it throw into more confusion than Mr. Baldwin. He and his Cabinet agreed with Sir Samuel Hoare. But such a storm arose, and he felt the force of such a great tide of public opinion, that he had to turn round and sacrifice Sir Samuel Hoare, tear up the Hoare-Laval agreement, and start off again on the old policy of 'Sanctions which mean war,' coupled with the proviso that there was to be no war. It has been very difficult to keep pace with all these chops and changes."

After a few weeks of hesitation, the Government decided on the lifting of the half-hearted sanctions that had been so ineffectively applied. The Prime Minister confessed to a feeling of bitter humiliation.

Winston pointed to the root cause of the humiliation which had reduced Britain's prestige throughout the world. "It is," he said, "the lamentable weakness in which our defences have been allowed to fall. Errors, feebleness, vacillation there have, no doubt, been in the current policy of the Government, but the underlying cause of our impotence is the improvident neglect of our defensive strength in years when every other great nation was arming sternly and resolutely."

Before proceeding with the record of Winston's further warnings on the Nazi menace, the narrative must be interrupted by the interlude of the Abdication.

## CHAPTER V

### *The Abdication*

HISTORIANS of the future will have their own ways of telling the story of the abdication of Edward the Eighth, the 300 days King, and the part that Winston Churchill played therein.<sup>1</sup>

The historian of the future will have one advantage as he will be in a position, with the publication of documents that are still secret, to know exactly what advice Winston gave to King Edward. All that has so far been vouchsafed is that it was to Winston that the Sovereign turned for advice and that it was Winston almost alone of the men who had been his friends who sought to find the means to avoid the extremity of abdication. But to the known facts.

This strictly non-controversial account of the abdication was written during the when there seemed to be good reason for avoiding any of the controversial issues.

It was on the first of December, 1936, that the country learned of what was termed the constitutional crisis that had arisen from the intention King Edward had declared of marrying Mrs. Ernest Simpson, an American lady who had already been twice married. The disclosure of news which was already being whispered amongst the well-informed and which was widely known in America, was made following an oblique reference to the matter by Dr. Blunt, Bishop of Bradford. On the third day of December Mr. Baldwin, then Prime Minister, was invited to make a statement on the constitutional situation, but declined to do so on the ground that it was not expedient. It was by that time common knowledge that the constitutional question was that of the King's abdication in furtherance of his decision to give up his throne rather than the lady of his choice.

Winston Churchill then intervened to ask the Prime Minister to give an assurance to the House that no irrevocable step would be taken before a formal statement was made to Parliament. The Prime Minister replied that he would consider and examine the question. He did not otherwise commit himself.

Thereafter King Edward made a request to Baldwin that he might consult Winston as a friend. This in itself was a constitutional problem, for the Prime Minister by virtue of his office is the King's adviser. In this case, however, it was on an issue between himself and his Prime Minister that the Sovereign was seeking advice.

Winston thereafter was summoned to give advice to the King.

It was natural that King Edward should have, in the hour of crisis, turned to Winston. He was the outstanding figure in the House of Commons, the Elder Statesman, a member of the Government Party and yet not in the Government. Lloyd George alone had a comparable range of Parliamentary and constitutional experience.

The following day Winston issued a statement for publication in the Press. It was a passionate appeal for delay so that the will of Parliament and the nation might become known. Following are its terms :

"I plead for time and patience. The nation must realise the character of the constitutional issue. There is no question of any conflict between the King and Parliament. Parliament has not been consulted in any way, nor allowed to express any opinion.

"The question is whether the King is to abdicate upon the advice of the Ministry of the day. No such advice has ever before been tendered to a Sovereign in Parliamentary times.

"This is not a case where differences have arisen between the Sovereign and his Ministers on any particular measure. These could certainly be resolved by normal processes of Parliament or dissolution.

"In this case we are in presence of a wish expressed by the Sovereign to perform an act which in no circumstances can be accomplished for nearly five months, and may conceivably, for various reasons, never be accomplished at all.

"That, on such a hypothetical and supposititious basis the supreme sacrifice of abdication and potential exile of the Sovereign should be demanded, finds no support whatever in the British Constitution. No Ministry has the authority to advise the abdication of the Sovereign. Only the most serious Parliamentary processes could even raise the issue in a decisive form.

"The Cabinet has no right to prejudge such a question without having previously ascertained at the very least the will of Parliament. This could, perhaps, be obtained by messages from the Sovereign to Parliament, and by addresses of both Houses after due consideration of these messages.

"For the Sovereign to abdicate incontinently in the present circumstances would inflict an injury upon the constitutional position of the monarchy which is measureless and cannot fail to be grievous to the institution itself, irrespective of the existing occupant of the Throne.

"Parliament would also fail entirely in its duty if it allowed such an event to occur as the signing of an abdication in response to the advice of Ministers without taking all precautions to make sure that these same processes may not be repeated with equal uncanny facility at no distant date in unforeseen circumstances. Clearly time is needed for searching constitutional debate.

"The next question—What has the King done? If it be true, as is alleged, that the King has proposed to his Ministers legislation which they are not prepared to introduce, the answer of Ministers should be not to call for abdication, but to refuse to act upon the King's request, which thereupon becomes inoperative.

"If the King refuses to take the advice of his Ministers they are, of course, free to resign. They have no right whatever to put pressure upon him to accept their advice by soliciting beforehand assurances from the Leader of the Opposition that he will not form an alternative Administration in the event of their resignation, and confronting the King with an ultimatum. Again, there is cause for time and patience.

"Why cannot time be granted? The fact that it is beyond the King's power to accomplish the purpose which Ministers oppose until the end of April [the decree absolute in Mrs. Simpson's divorce suit would not be pronounced until that month] surely strips the matter of constitutional urgency.

"There may be some inconvenience, but that inconvenience stands on a different plane altogether from the grave constitutional issues I have set forth.

"National and Imperial considerations alike require that before such a dread step as a demand for abdication is taken, not only should the constitutional position be newly defined by Parliament, but that every method should be exhausted which gives the hope of a happier solution.

"Lastly, but surely not least, there is the human and personal aspect.

"The King has been for many weeks under the greatest strain, moral and mental, that can fall upon a man. Not only has he been inevitably subjected to the supreme stress of his public duty, but also to the agony of his own personal feelings.

"Surely, if he asks for time to consider the advice of his Ministers, now that at length matters have been brought to this dire culmination, he should not be denied.

"Howsoever this matter may turn, it is pregnant with calamity and inseparable from inconvenience. But all the evil aspects will be aggravated beyond measure if the utmost chivalry and compassion is not shown, both by Ministers and by the British nation, towards a gifted and beloved King torn between private and public obligations of love and duty.

"The Churches stand for charity. They believe in the efficacy of prayer. Surely their influence must not oppose a period of reflection. I plead, I pray, that time and tolerance will not be denied.

"The King has no means of personal access to his Parliament or his people. Between him and them stand in their office the Ministers of the Crown. If they thought it their duty to engage all their power and influence against him, still he must remain silent.

"All the more must they be careful not to be the judge in their own case, and to show a loyal and Christian patience even at some political embarrassment to themselves.

"If an abdication were to be hastily extorted the outrage so committed would cast its shadow forward across many chapters of the history of the British Empire."

It is regrettable to have to record that as sequel to the issue of that statement Winston was charged with trying to make political capital out of the crisis for his own personal ends. Such is the fact. It was represented that his purpose was to form a King's Party so that as Baldwin's successor he might undertake for the King what Baldwin had declined to do.

On Thursday, 7 December, the Prime Minister made to the House a partial disclosure of the situation in carefully chosen words. Its effect was that the King was engaged in reaching a conclusion on the course he would take. He deprecated the asking of supplementary questions as the matter was of such gravity and the answers would have to be improvised.

Winston, however, rose to repeat the request he had made before that no irrevocable step should be taken before a formal statement was made to Parliament. The reception he received must be described by an observer at the time. "When Mr. Churchill, who had been leaning forward in his corner seat below the gangway, rose to put a further question the House became impatient. As he uttered the first mystifying and familiar words of his now usual request that 'no irrevocable step should be taken,' there were cries from all sides of 'no' and 'sit down.' It was the most striking rebuff of modern Parliamentary history. It is to be regretted that Mr. Churchill did not attempt to move an adjournment so that the House would have been able to see for the first time the insignificant dimensions of the section which was following him."

In fact Parliament was not vouchsafed a full statement before the final and irrevocable step had been taken. The abdication of King Edward the Eighth was announced by the Speaker to the House of Commons on 10 December. Thereafter a statement was made by the Prime Minister and in the brief debate that followed Winston said :

"Nothing is more certain or more obvious than that recrimination or controversy at this time would not only be useless, but harmful and wrong. What is done, is done. What has been done, or left undone, belongs to history, and to history, so far as I am concerned, it shall be left. I will, therefore, make two observations only.

"The first is this : It is clear from what we have been told this afternoon that there was at no time any constitutional issue between the King and his Ministers, or between the King and Parliament. The supremacy of Parliament over the Crown ; the duty of the Sovereign to act in accordance with the advice of his Ministers ; neither of those was ever at any moment in question. I venture to say that no Sovereign has ever conformed more strictly or more faithfully to the letter and spirit of the Constitution than his present Majesty. In fact, he has voluntarily made a sacrifice for the peace and strength of his realm, which go far beyond the bounds required by the law and constitution. This is my first observation.

"My second is this : I have, throughout, pleaded for time ; anyone can see how grave would have been the evils of protracted controversy. On the other hand it was, in my view, our duty to endure these evils, even at serious inconvenience, if there was any hope that time would bring a solution.

"Whether there was any hope or not is a mystery which, at the present time, it is impossible to resolve. Time was also important from another point of view. It was essential that there should be no room for aspersions, after the event, that the King had been hurried to his decision. I believe that, if this decision had been

taken last week, it could not have been declared that it was an unhurried decision, so far as the King himself was concerned, but now I accept whole-heartedly what the Prime Minister has proved, namely, that the decision taken this week has been taken by his Majesty freely, voluntarily and spontaneously, in his own time and in his own way. As I have been looking at this matter, as is well known, from an angle different from that of most members, I thought it my duty to place this fact also upon record.

"That is all I have to say upon the disputable part of this matter, but I hope the House will bear with me for a minute or two, because it was my duty as Home Secretary, more than a quarter of a century ago, to stand beside his Majesty and proclaim his style and titles at his investiture as Prince of Wales amid the sunlit battlements of Caernarvon Castle, and ever since then he has honoured me here, and also in war-time, with his personal kindness and, I may even say, friendship. I should have been ashamed if, in my independent and unofficial position, I had not cast about for every lawful means, even the most forlorn, to keep him on the Throne of his fathers, to which he only recently succeeded amid the hopes and prayers of all.

"In this Prince there were discerned qualities of courage, of simplicity, of sympathy and, above all, of sincerity, qualities rare and precious which might have made his Reign glorious in the annals of this ancient Monarchy. It is the acme of tragedy that these very virtues should, in the private sphere, have led only to this melancholy and bitter conclusion. But, although to-day our hopes are withered, still I will assert that his personality will not go down uncherished to future ages, that it will be particularly remembered in the homes of his poorer subjects, and that they will ever wish from the bottoms of their hearts for his private peace and happiness, and for the happiness of those who are dear to him.

"I must say one word more, and I say it especially to those who here and out of doors—and do not underrate their numbers—who are most poignantly afflicted by what has occurred. Danger gathers upon our path. We cannot afford—we have no right—to look back. We must look forward ; we must obey the exhortation of the Prime Minister to look forward. The stronger the advocate of monarchical principle a man may be, the more zealously must he now endeavour to fortify the Throne, and to give his Majesty's successor that strength which can only come from the love of a united nation and Empire."

With this speech Winston's part in the abdication was completed and with it must end this strictly objective record. The rest, as his speech put it, must be left to history.

## CHAPTER VI

*The Darkening Scene*

IN December, 1936, King Edward the Eighth having abdicated, King George the Sixth succeeded to the throne. In June, 1937, Stanley Baldwin having resigned, Neville Chamberlain succeeded as Prime Minister. The National Government underwent a minor reconstruction. But, amidst a world of change, Winston Churchill remained in his corner seat below the gangway, a private member still.

He was now past his sixtieth year. The prophecy made thirty years before that he would become Prime Minister was unfulfilled, and it would have been a bold man to have repeated that prophecy in the year 1937. Winston now appeared to stand apart from the main stream of politics.

Once the India Reforms had reached the Statute Book, it had been frequently rumoured that he would find his place on the Treasury Bench once more. But the invitation never came and it began to appear that he might finish his Parliamentary career in the corner seat below the gangway. Already there was a dangerous disposition to thrust upon him the role of Elder Statesman.

It had been a magnificent career. All the principal posts a layman is competent to fill had been occupied by him, the Foreign Office excepted. But was he, like Curzon, to be denied the highest place? Looking back, there were two points in his career which could be seen as turning-points. There was the first split with the Conservatives over Protection—but for that he would assuredly have become leader of the Tories years before and so stepped into the Premiership. And again, India—had he not quarrelled with Baldwin, the succession might have been his and not Chamberlain's. Now the inexorable years were passing.

In 1935, his chances for office had been reckoned bright. His warnings on the menace of Nazi Germany had restored him to the place he had held before the protracted divergence on India. The political prophets were casting him for high place, and then an article from his pen in a monthly magazine ruined his chances. The article was a survey of the career of Hitler, the Austrian house-painter who lorded it over Germany. It was frank criticism, but its attacks would pass as mere commonplaces to-day. It chanced that British policy was then directed to one of its periodical attempts to reach an accommodation with the Nazis. There was an angry protest in Berlin, and so the expected offer to Winston was never made.

Winston, by now, was drawing all the fire of the Nazis. Not even his famous ancestor was more execrated on the Continent as Malbrouk than Winston by the propagandists of the Third Reich. When things were dull in Berlin, Goebbels turned the tap of his venom against Winston for a day's diversion.

Churchill—German hater, was the Goebbels parrot cry. "For years now," Goebbels wrote, "Churchill has painted not landscapes but a picture of the German danger. He is the leader of the implacable haters of Germany in England, and even if he is somewhat less dangerous than those sinister wire-pullers in the half-darkness of the Secret Service and of many ministerial quarters, yet nevertheless he sets in motion those waves of gall which are not to be taken too light-heartedly. His disposition for untenable accusations, Münchhausen fairy tales and polemics dates presumably from the time when he was correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*."

A more official denunciation on behalf of the Wilhelmstrasse was made through the official *Diplomatic Correspondence*, which accused him of desiring the encirclement and suppression of Germany. Churchill, it was declared, was fond of coming forward as the ever-ready spokesman of the circles in which it had become usual to give the appearance of justification for personal dislike of an honourable understanding with Germany by suspicions of Germany's will for peace.

It might have been concluded that a British statesman denounced by Berlin was the very man Britain would honour. But such was not the view during the period of appeasement.

Austen Chamberlain noted with regret the passing over of Winston. Commenting on the possible choices for Defence Minister, he wrote:<sup>1</sup> "In my view there is only one man who by his studies and special abilities and aptitudes is marked out for it, and that man is Winston Churchill. I don't suppose that S.B. will offer it to him, and I don't think Neville would wish to have him back, but they are both wrong. He is the right man for the post, and in such dangerous times that consideration ought to be decisive."

When Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister the inclusion of Winston in the Ministry was urged in stronger terms and by a wider circle. Lord Salisbury, heir of the Victorian statesman, broke his political silence to extend his support to the movement. There was no response from 10 Downing Street.

It may well be imagined that Neville Chamberlain had stronger reasons than his predecessor to refrain from offering a post to the candid critic of Conservatism. Neville took office resolved to push with determination, as a vigorous policy, the mild aspirations for coming to an agreement with the Dictators that were indulged under Baldwin's leadership. A calculated and determined policy was to

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Life of Sir Austen Chamberlain*, by Sir C. Petrie Vol. II, 408.

support the easier-going ways of the past, and a firmer hand was to rule the Ministry in place of the tolerance that Ministers had enjoyed. Anthony Eden was shortly to discover that Chamberlain's Foreign Secretary could not expect the freedom to deal with affairs that Baldwin's Foreign Minister had enjoyed.

A Prime Minister so obviously bent on being master of his own Cabinet could not be expected to go out of his way to introduce so incalculable a personality to his Council Chamber. A Churchill, plainly, was not to be dominated in the manner in which so many men of the Chamberlain team would submit to Prime Ministerial domination.

When the party met to elect Neville Chamberlain as leader in place of the man who was vacating the helm after twelve years' service, it was Winston who claimed the right to second the nomination that the veteran Earl of Derby had proposed. He did so in a felicitous speech which only in one aside made reference to his own relations, of, shall I say, non-belligerency with the party leadership.

Recalling Neville's credentials of memorable achievement, Winston paid tribute to his prudent, austere, skilful and vigorous administration of the Exchequer. He passed on to make graceful allusion to the son's part in carrying into effect the father's policy of Imperial Preference.

"In this historic chain of our fiscal policy," he said, "Neville Chamberlain was not only giving effect to the conviction of his own life-time—he was giving effect, as Lord Derby has reminded us, to convictions inherited from and bequeathed to it by his illustrious father, the famous Joe, whom many of us on this platform knew and from whom I, in my youth, whether as a supporter or an opponent, received many treasured marks of kindness."

A reference to re-armament and that one forgivable allusion to his own past in the campaign that forced it, was led up to by the observation that without Neville's careful administration at the Exchequer we should not have been in a position to provide the vast sums required for national defence.

"Any Chancellor of the Exchequer," he went on, "naturally finds as his normal business that he should resist and criticize and canvass expenditure, particularly expenditure on what are called unproductive channels. But when the late Government were at length convinced—you will pardon my 'at length'—of the urgent need to re-arm against the danger in which we stood and still stand, no one was more active than Mr. Chamberlain."

"Indeed, no one was so active in pressing forward the policy of re-armament and in providing the immense supplies of money which had been rendered available, largely through his own foresight and prudence."

"We feel sure that the leader we are about to choose, as a dis-

tinguished Parliamentarian and House of Commons man, will not resent honest differences about methods of administration, which must inevitably from time to time arise among those who mean the same thing.

"I will also say that I feel sure that his great experience of the party and all its branches, and all its organization, will make it certain that party opinion will not be denied ; that if subordinate it will still have its rightful place in the mind of the leader. We have to combat the wolf of Socialism, and we shall be able to do it far more effectively as a pack of hounds than as a flock of sheep."

Winston ended with an expression of regret that Austen Chamberlain no longer survived to share the satisfaction in his half brother's succession to a glorious task.

On the very day following, in the House of Commons, Winston assisted the new Prime Minister in extricating himself from an embarrassing Budgetary predicament. Neville, as Chancellor, had introduced the Budget and had included a special tax as a National Defence Contribution. It gave rise to loud and sustained denunciation. When the proposals came to be debated in detail, he had handed over the N.D.C. as a legacy to his Chancellor, Sir John Simon. When the clause came up for consideration, Conservative back-benchers plainly indicated their dislike. It was an anxious dilemma for the new Prime Minister. Was he, at the very outset, to suffer in prestige by abandoning one of the outstanding features of his final Budget?

Winston made the way of retreat easy in a speech in his happiest vein of wit. He began with the confession that he took a friendly interest in this new Government without quite knowing why he did so. "I would not go so far as to call it a paternal interest because, speaking quite candidly, it is not the sort of Government I would have bred myself. But if it is not paternal, at any rate I may call it avuncular."

A chuckling House then heard canons of financial orthodoxy quoted, each of which hit the Defence Contribution hard.

Excellent motives were allowed to Mr. Chamberlain, but since the Budget his tax had been riddled and shown to be unworkable.

Face-saving was not important. Avowal of mistakes used to be one of Mr. Baldwin's most successful weapons in discomfiting those who with much toil pointed out his errors. This smiling rueful reminiscence of Winston's old conflicts set the House roaring.

Various precedents for withdrawal were quoted. Walpole, with his "this dance can no further go" on the Excise Bill ; Sir Michael Hicks Beach, "Black Michael," giving up twopenny cheques, to be cheered at the Carlton Club.

Finally, with gusto, Winston took a case of his own. He was in trouble over the kerosene tax—"a very good tax." The Chief

Whip telegraphed to him in the country, "All our fellows against it and all the others too." Had there been any similar communications recently?

"I acted with great promptitude. In the nick of time, just as Mr. Snowden was rising with overwhelming fury, I got up——" (Roars of laughter drowned the rest of the sentence.)

"Was I humiliated?" Winston cried. "Was I accused of running away? No! Everyone said, 'How clever, how quick, how right.' Pardon me referring to it, Mr. Speaker. It was one of my best days."

Shaking with mirth, the House recovered to hear a serious argument that long Cabinet examination, "a good knocking about behind the scenes," should be given to proposals for new taxes.

So, after grave insistence that Government supporters must not vote against the Finance Bill as a whole, Winston appealed earnestly to Mr. Chamberlain to drop the Defence Contribution, "drop the whole thing, and drop it now." And his counsel was taken.

Parliamentary observers could not but contrast Winston's achievement that day with his experience only a few months before when he made his interventions during the abdication almost to be shouted down. That was in December. Then everyone said that he would never recover from the blow to his reputation. Now in June a packed and delighted House hung on his words. The man who seemed to be finished scored a Parliamentary success and saved the reputation of the man who had omitted him from his Cabinet.

At least the proposal to raise a tax specifically allocated as a contribution to defence was an indication of a growing realization of the need for re-armament. Winston's long campaign had not been without avail. The first sign of awakening to the peril was furnished by the issue of the Government White Paper in March 1935 announcing a halt in the process of disarmament, declaring that "An additional expenditure on the armaments of the Three Defence Services can no longer be safely postponed." A year later a Minister was appointed to co-ordinate Defence, Baldwin choosing for this post the elderly churchman-lawyer Sir Thomas Inskip, who was to serve as Lord Chief Justice of England under the title of Lord Caldecote. By then we were lagging behind the Nazis, suffering the handicap of the years the "locusts hath eaten."

Vigorous measures were needed, but Baldwin had thought it necessary to defer to public opinion. "Supposing," he said of the 1935 election, "I had gone to the country and said that Germany was re-arming and that we must re-arm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to the cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain."

Winston protested at what he termed this "astounding apologia," observing, "When I first went into Parliament, now nearly 40 years ago, it was inculcated upon me that the most insulting charge which could be made against a Minister of the Crown, short of actual malfeasance, was that he had endangered the safety of the country and neglected its defences from electioneering considerations. Yet, such are the surprising qualities of Mr. Baldwin that what he had been taught to shun has now been elevated into a canon of political virtue. If any mischance should result from a failure of duty or concealment of facts, we are assured that this is the inherent fault of democracy and that democracy must always be behind the dictators."

In 1937 the world was given a demonstration that Britain was at length to start re-arming in real earnest when Neville Chamberlain announced that the Government proposed to expend £400,000,000, financed by means of loans on a five-year Defence plan. The Government was roused to the need of the times even if the Socialists still lagged in the locust years. The Socialist Party, indeed, puzzled its friends by calling for the maximum of vigour in British policy and insisting on the minimum of expenditure on defence. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the case of the Civil War in Spain, where Italy and Germany gave a new meaning to the word "non-intervention."

On Spain, Winston gave general support to the Government's non-intervention policy. What, he asked, had the British people to do with affairs in Spain. "Have we not enough trouble in our hands in other directions? Is the state of our defences so remarkably good that we can afford to involve ourselves in this quarrel? Could we as a united nation take either one side or the other? . . . We must be careful not to repeat on Spain the same kind of ridiculous conduct we were guilty of a year or so ago over Abyssinia. We must not act beyond our duty and our state. It is no use once again leading other nations up the garden and then running away when the dog growls. It is at Geneva rather than in Spain that the peace of the world may best be secured. Meanwhile let us press forward with our re-armament for the world danger grows."

Had Winston been playing the game of a political careerist, he could have led the dissatisfied of all parties against the policy of appeasement. It would have been the easiest of campaigns to conduct with much beating of the patriotic drum, denunciation of giving way to the dictators, which would have brought in the Imperialists, and a call for a stronger policy on Spain which would have appealed to the Socialists.

It is, I find, a fairly common misconception that Winston was a leading and outspoken critic of the Chamberlain policy. Actually he played a part dictated by the best interests of the country.

Refresh your memory with the speeches—they were critical, but not the onslaughts of denunciation that Winston finds it so natural to deliver. They maintain that avuncular relationship he had suggested for himself.

There is a fine tone about the fortnightly syndicated articles he was writing in those days for the Press. Reading them at the time, critics of the Chamberlain régime were conscious of disappointment ; they always lacked those caustic phrases that were to be expected from the man on whom other critics placed the rôle of critic-in-chief of the Government. Reading them afterwards<sup>1</sup> one could not but be struck with the tone consistently maintained. Criticisms were subordinated to the needs of the national situation. It was the duty of men of goodwill to get together in the face of the growing menace.

Of the reality of that menace there could as 1938 dawned be little room for doubt. In 1935 Hitler repudiated the clauses of the Versailles Treaty limiting the size of the German army, and reinstated conscription for Germany. In 1936 the Axis was formed, Mussolini providing the catchword for the association by his remark that the line between Rome and Berlin was not a division but an axis. In 1936 Hitler re-entered the Rhineland, denouncing the Treaties of Versailles and Locarno.

In February 1938, Anthony Eden resigned from the Foreign Office. Neville Chamberlain, taking the control of Foreign Affairs into his own hands, had decided to gamble on the good faith of Mussolini, with whom he sought to negotiate an understanding. Eden found it impossible to accommodate himself either with the new methods or the new policy. He resigned his post as did his Under-Secretary, Lord Cranborne.

Winston, in the debate that followed, supported the resigning Ministers. He paid tribute to Eden as the “one fresh figure of the first magnitude arising out of a generation which was ravaged by the war.”

Declaring that the moment was inopportune for negotiating with Mussolini, he drew a picture of an impoverished Italy. “The industrious, amiable Italian people, long overstrained—everything in the country eaten up in order to augment the magnificence of the State—taxes enormous, finances broken, officials abounding—all kinds of indispensable raw materials practically unpurchaseable across the exchanges, Abyssinia a curse—a corpse bound on the back of the killer, and in Libya and Spain perhaps 400,000 men overseas all to be maintained by a continuous drain on the hard-driven, ground-down people of Italy.

“I believe myself that we might have left this scene alone for a time. I think that the Italian dictator would soon have been

<sup>1</sup> *Step by Step*, by Winston Churchill.

compelled to bring many of his troops home from Spain, where they have given little satisfaction either to himself or to Genl. Franco. After all, it is sometimes wise to allow natural processes to work and for crimes and follies to be paid in coin from their own mint."

The internal condition of Italy was certainly causing her dictator grave anxiety. He stood in need of an external success. It was quite easy to understand how Signor Mussolini should have instructed Grandi (Ambassador in London) to encourage talk with Britain. But it was less easy to understand why we should have hurried so eagerly to the rescue.

Winston read an extract from an Italian newspaper asserting that Italian opinion would not change until "London's foreign policy ceased to be directed by Mr. Eden who on many occasions has shown his poisonous attitude of mind to Italy." It was with the greater concern that he had read that the Prime Minister had intervened to take charge of the negotiations with Rome, since the Foreign Secretary's dismissal was being demanded by the Italian Press.

"The Prime Minister," he went on, "has taken control of foreign affairs and of this decisive sphere of foreign affairs into his own hands. The House by a large majority is, I am convinced, ready that he should do so. Whatever my views may be as to the wisdom or un-wisdom of a particular course, I am not going to fail to wish and hope that he may be rightly guided and his efforts crowned with success. I will not attempt to predict the course of the negotiations with Italy to which we are now committed, but I must say that their initiation appears untimely and their outlook somewhat bleak."

This last week had been a good week for the dictators, "one of the best they have ever had." Since Mr. Eden's resignation was announced the friends of England all over the world were dismayed, and the foes of England were exultant. We had had a heavy price to pay for all this. Small countries in Europe, balancing whether they would adhere to the Liberal or the authoritarian system, were inclined to move to the side of power and resolution.

The other day Hitler had said that Europe was confused. That part of Europe which had parliamentary governments was in a great state of confusion, but the States under dictatorship pursued the path to their objectives with ruthless purpose. No one could deny that at every step they got what they wanted.

The German occupation of the Rhineland and the German intervention in Austria were opportunities that were missed for making a stand.

"I predict," he concluded, "that the day will come at some point or other, on some issue or other, when you will have to make a stand, and I pray to God that when that day comes we may not

find, through an unwise policy, we may have to make that stand alone."

A week later Winston supported the Prime Minister's defence of his choice of Lord Halifax as Eden's successor at the Foreign Office. The Socialists had protested at the appointment as Foreign Secretary of a man who sat in the House of Lords. Citing the cases of Salisbury, Rosebery and Lansdowne, Winston argued that there was nothing derogatory to the Commons in having a Peer at the Foreign Office. "When," he said, "we have the Prime Minister here, what is the good of worrying about the Foreign Secretary? What is the point in crying out for the moon when you have the sun, when you have the bright orb of day in whose resplendent beams all the lesser luminaries hide their radiance?"

In passages of exquisite raillery he examined the claims of other possibles for the post. There was the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, who was very impressive physically. Having brought our defences to a thoroughly satisfactory condition with the assistance of only a single secretary and a lady typist, it might be thought undesirable to remove Sir Thomas Inskip from that sphere. There were the claims of the Minister of Labour, Mr. Brown, who certainly had one great qualification, "for never since Cromwell would such a voice have gone out." As for the Minister of Health (Sir Kingsley Wood), one would have liked to see his cherubic bland smile confronting scowling dictators, but he was absolutely necessary where he was. In fact, one realized how good these Ministers were in their jobs when one began to think of them in some other job.

After these equivocal testimonials, Winston paid a sincere tribute to Lord Halifax, the proper man to bear the burden. "It would," he declared, "be a great mistake to dismiss Lord Halifax as a weak, peace-at-any-price sort of person. He is a man not only of integrity and great character but of force and high courage, and if ultimately provoked will be found as lasting and enduring as any on any side of the House."

Mr. Eden resigned from the Foreign Office in February; in March Hitler launched his armies against Austria. It was a blow to the policy of appeasement, but Neville Chamberlain characteristically followed the course he had chosen.

The week following the rape of Austria, Winston crossed the Channel for a series of meetings with the French political and military leaders. He met M. Blum, the Premier, M. Daladier, War Minister, and Genl. Gamelin, Chief of the Defence Staff. In his private capacity he was able to make a frank statement on British policy. As a friend of France he was able to voice views widely held in London on the need for the maximum of co-operation between the two countries in their preparations to meet the Nazi aggressor. He stressed the necessity for concerted measures in the

development of the Air Forces of the two nations both in their development and in their operations. During his visit he met Paul Reynaud, with whom he was to have fateful discussions a few months later. Each man was impressed by the other's personality.

On returning to London Winston reported to Lord Halifax at the Foreign Office on his discussions. The visit paved the way to an ultimate understanding for the pooling of the resources of the two allied powers.

Throughout the greater part of the Years Between, Winston Churchill played the part of critic, of varying degrees of friendliness, of successive Ministries, of their measures and, in particular, of their omissions. In a speech at Manchester Free Trade Hall in May 1938, he came forward with his own constructive proposals for meeting the emergency of the times. It was a policy of combining the menaced states of Europe in a federation of defence under the ægis of a revivified League of Nations.

"Arm," he declared, "and stand by the Covenant of the League. If the League of Nations has been mishandled and broken we must rebuild it. If the authority in the Covenant is divided we must reinforce it.

"Here is the practical plan.

"Britain and France are now united. Together they are an enormous force, which few countries would dare to challenge. I should like to see these two countries go to all the smaller States that are menaced, who are going to be devoured one by one by the Nazi tyranny, and say to them bluntly, 'We are not going to help you if you are not going to help yourselves. What are you going to do about it?'

"If we could rally even ten well-armed States in Europe all banded together to resist an aggression upon any one of them, then we should be so strong that the immediate danger might be warded off and a breathing-space be gained for building later a still broader structure of peace. Is that not far better than being dragged piecemeal into a war when half those who might be your friends and allies will already have been pulled down one by one?

"Some of the countries who should be asked whether they will join Great Britain and France in this special duty to the League are Yugo-Slavia, Rumania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. These countries can be mopped up one by one, but together they are of enormous strength. In the next place there are Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey, all States who wish to preserve their individuality and national independence. If this powerful group of Danubian and Balkan States were firmly united with the two great Western democracies an immense—probably a decisive—step towards the stability would be achieved.

"Even that would only be a beginning. To the east of Europe

lies the enormous power of Russia, a country whose form of government I detest, but which at any rate seeks no military aggression upon its neighbours ; a country profoundly menaced by Nazi hostility. We should certainly not go cap in hand to Soviet Russia or count in any definite manner upon Russian action. But how improvidently foolish we should be when dangers are so great to put needless barriers in the way of the general association of the great Russian mass with the resistance to an act of Nazi aggression.

"Then when we have gathered these forces and by united strength removed the fear of war, then will be the time to deal with the grievances of discontented nations, to get rid of the causes of hatred and jealousy, as you will have removed the causes of fear. Then will be the time to proceed to the culmination of the work—the broad general reduction of the hideous burden of armaments, which if it continues to grow at its present rate can only lead through bankruptcy to mutual destruction.

"We are told we must make a special pact with Nazi Germany. I want to know what that pact is going to be and at whose expense it is to be made. Undoubtedly the Government could make an agreement with Germany. All they have to do is to give her back her former colonies or such others as she may desire ; to muzzle the British Press and platforms by a law of censorship ; to give Herr Hitler a free hand to spread the Nazi system and dominance far and wide through Central Europe.

"There is the alternative foreign policy. It is one which in my view would be disgraceful and disastrous. In the first place it leads us straight to war. The Nazi régime, elated by this triumph and with every restraint removed, would proceed unchecked upon its path of aggression. We should be helpless, silent, gagged, apparently consenting spectators of the horrors which would spread through Central Europe.

"The Government that enforced such a policy would be swept away. The mere instinct of self-preservation would make it possible for us to purchase a fleeting and precarious immunity at the cost of the ruin and enslavement of Europe. After an interval, long or short, we should be drawn into a war, but by that time we should be confronted with an antagonist overwhelmingly powerful and find ourselves deprived of every friend."

There was Winston's alternative to the policy of appeasement. Of its possibilities we can in retrospect form our conclusions according to our varying sympathies. His plan was never put to the test as was the policy of appeasement. By May 1938 time was already running short.

A Parliamentary interlude known as the Sandys Case came as light relief during the summer of 1938. Mr. Duncan Sandys, Winston's son-in-law and later Minister of Works, made com-

plaint in June that he had been threatened with proceedings under the Official Secrets Act when being questioned by the Attorney-General. A Second Lieutenant of the 51st (London) Anti-Aircraft Brigade, Mr. Sandys was given certain information by his Adjutant, Captain H. T. Hogan. Considering that this information reflected seriously on London's Air Defence plans, Mr. Sandys put down a question on the subject, the terms of which he communicated privately to the Secretary for War, Mr. Hore Belisha.

While Mr. Sandys was concerned over the state of London's defences, Hore Belisha was concerned over the disclosure of confidential information. The interview between Mr. Sandys and the Attorney-General followed, as it was desired to obtain the source of this information. This Mr. Sandys declined to disclose, and when the Official Secrets Act was mentioned to him, he was led to conclude that he was being threatened under its terms—hence his complaint in the House to Mr. Speaker.

Surprise, for a day or two, followed surprise. The House referred the complaint to a Committee. The Army Council referred the disclosure of secrets to another tribunal. This led to a further complaint from Mr. Sandys that he was summoned to appear before the military court.

It was a pretty clash of authorities and the Committee of Privileges was invited to investigate. Winston sat on the Committee and was criticised for doing so because of his relationship to Mr. Sandys. "Odd as it may seem," he replied to the critics, "that point occurred to me at the time. But when I saw that neither the Attorney-General, whose conduct was directly under review, nor the Prime Minister, whose government was intimately concerned, found the slightest difficulty in acting in a judicial capacity as members of the Committee of Privileges, I felt that I ought to try to live up to their standards."

The Committee's investigations ended in a number of not very serious criticisms being passed on the Attorney-General, the Army Council, the Secretary for War. The Sandys case appeared to be an affair of the first magnitude when it broke in the summer. The report was almost unnoticed when it came to be issued at the height of the Munich crisis.

Czechoslovakia and Munich—these were the principal preoccupations of the late summer of 1938. World alarm mounted to the pinnacle of suspense as Britain and France—but as we know now a not very resolute France—were seen at last to be making a stand against the German dictator. For a space it seemed that war must come, and then Neville Chamberlain flew to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden and the peril was averted. Czechoslovakia was sacrificed. The democracies thereby gained a further twelve months

of peace. Their loss in prestige was plain to see. Their loss from the fall of the bastion of Czechoslovakia was equally indisputable. Their loss in honour—on that there has been some debate.

Winston Churchill played no part in the Munich crisis. At its height he called for the immediate recall of Parliament in a statement that protested against the danger of submitting to Hitler's terms.

"It is necessary," he urged, "that the nation should realize the magnitude of the disaster into which we are being led. The partition of Czechoslovakia under Anglo-French pressure amounts to a complete surrender by the Western democracies to the Nazi threat of force. Such a collapse will not bring peace or safety to Great Britain and France. On the contrary, it will bring both countries into a position of ever-increasing weakness and danger."

"The neutralisation of Czechoslovakia alone means the liberation of 25 German divisions to threaten the Western front. The path to the Black Sea will be laid wide open to triumphant Nazi-ism. Acceptance of Herr Hitler's terms involves the prostration of Europe before the Nazi power, of which the fullest advantage will certainly be taken. The menace, therefore, is not to Czechoslovakia, but to the cause of freedom and democracy in every country."

"The idea that safety can be purchased by throwing a small State to the wolves is a fatal delusion. The German war power will grow faster than the French and British can complete their preparations for defence. If peace is to be preserved on a lasting basis, it can only be by combination of all the Powers whose convictions and whose vital interests are opposed to Nazi domination. A month ago this would have been possible, but all was cast away. Parliament should be called without further delay."

Winston was a sorrowful spectator of the peace of Munich and of the outburst of national hysteria that greeted the return of the Prime Minister with his double assurance of "peace for our time" and "peace with honour." Four days after Neville Chamberlain came back with his scrap of paper pledge from Hitler proclaiming the "desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again," the House of Commons was invited to adopt a testimonial to the Government for the policy which "averted war in the recent crisis." The speeches of members were for the most part phrased in eulogistic terms.

Winston delivered his judgment on what had been done. It was a speech restrained in criticism but deep in foreboding. History will echo the terms he used.

"If I do not begin this afternoon," he said, "by paying the usual, and indeed almost invariable, tributes to the Prime Minister for his handling of this crisis, it is certainly not from any lack of personal regard. We have always, over a great many years, had

very pleasant relations, but I am sure it is much better to say exactly what we think about public affairs, and this is certainly not the time when it is worth anyone's while to court political popularity.

"I will, therefore, begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat, and that France has suffered even more than we have. The utmost my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been able to secure by all his immense exertions, by all the great efforts and mobilisation which took place in this country, and by all the anguish and strain through which we have passed in this country, the utmost he has been able to gain for Czechoslovakia in the matters which were in dispute has been that the German dictator, instead of snatching the victuals from the table, has been content to have them served to him course by course.

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Sir John Simon) said it was the first time Herr Hitler had been made to retract—I think that was the word—in any degree. We really must not waste time after all this long debate upon the difference between the positions reached at Berchtesgaden, at Godesberg and at Munich. They can be very simply epitomised, if the House will permit me to vary the metaphor. £1 was demanded at the pistol's point. When £1 was given, £2 were demanded at the pistol's point. Finally, the dictator consented to take £1 17s. 6d. and the rest in promises of goodwill for the future.

"Now I come to the point, which was mentioned to me just now from some quarters of the House, about the saving of peace. No one has been a more resolute and uncompromising a struggler for peace than the Prime Minister. Everyone knows that. Never has there been such intense and undaunted determination to maintain and secure peace. That is quite true. Nevertheless, I am not quite clear why there was so much danger of Great Britain or France being involved in a war with Germany at this juncture, if, i.e. fact, they were ready all along to sacrifice Czechoslovakia.

"The terms which the Prime Minister brought back with him could easily have been agreed, I believe, through the ordinary diplomatic channels, at any time during the summer. And I will say this, that I believe the Czechs, left to themselves and told they were going to get no help from the Western Powers, would have been able to make better terms than they have got after all this tremendous perturbation ; they could hardly have had worse.

"All is over. Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness. She has suffered in every respect by her association with the Western democracies and with the League of Nations, of which she has always been an obedient servant. She has suffered in particular from her association with

France, under whose guidance and policy she has been actuated for so long.

"I venture to think that in future the Czechoslovak State cannot be maintained as an independent entity. I think you will find that in a period of time which may be measured by years, but may be measured only by months, Czechoslovakia will be engulfed in the Nazi régime. Perhaps they may join it in despair or in revenge. At any rate, that story is over and told.

"But we cannot consider the abandonment and ruin of Czechoslovakia in the light only of what happened only last month. It is the most grievous consequence of what we have done and of what we have left undone in the last five years—five years of futile good intentions, five years of eager search for the line of least resistance five years of uninterrupted retreat of British power, five years of neglect of our air defences. Those are the features which I stand here to expose and which marked an improvident stewardship for which Great Britain and France have dearly to pay.

"We have been reduced in those five years from a position where the very word 'war' was considered one which could be used only by persons qualifying for a lunatic asylum. We have been reduced from a position of safety and power—power to do good, power to be generous to a beaten foe, power to make terms with Germany, power to give her proper redress for her grievances, power to stop her arming if we chose, power to take any step in strength or mercy or justice which we thought right—reduced in five years from a position safe and unchallenged to where we stand now.

"When I think of the fair hopes of a long peace which still lay before Europe at the beginning of 1933 when Herr Hitler first obtained power, and of all the opportunities of arresting the growth of the Nazi power which have been thrown away, when I think of the immense combinations and resources which have been neglected or squandered, I cannot believe that a parallel exists in the whole course of history.

"So far as this country is concerned the responsibility must rest with those who have had the undisputed control of our political affairs. They neither prevented Germany from re-arming, nor did they re-arm ourselves in time. They quarrelled with Italy without saving Ethiopia. They exploited and discredited the vast institutions of the League of Nations, and they neglected to make alliances and combinations which might have repaired previous errors, and thus they left us in the hour of trial without adequate national defence or effective international security.

"We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Great Britain and France. Do not let us blind ourselves to that. It must now be accepted that all the countries of

Central and Eastern Europe will make the best terms they can with the triumphant Nazi power. The system of alliances in Central Europe upon which France has relied for her safety has been swept away, and I can see no means by which it can be reconstituted. The road down the Danube Valley to the Black Sea, the road which leads as far as Turkey, has been opened.

"What will be the position, I want to know, of France and England this year and the year afterwards? What will be the position of that Western front of which we are in full authority the guarantors? The German army at the present time is more numerous than that of France, though not nearly so matured or perfected. Next year it will grow much larger, and its maturity will be more complete. If the Nazi dictator should choose to look westward, as he may, bitterly will France and England regret the loss of that fine army of ancient Bohemia which was estimated last week to require not fewer than 30 German divisions for its destruction.

"Can we blind ourselves to the great change which has taken place in the military situation, and to the dangers we have to meet? We are in process, I believe, of adding in four years, four battalions to the British Army. No fewer than two have already been completed. Here are at least 30 divisions which must now be taken into consideration upon the French front, besides the 12 that were captured when Austria was engulfed. Many people, no doubt, honestly believe that they are only giving away the interests of Czechoslovakia, whereas I fear we shall find that we have deeply compromised, and perhaps fatally endangered, the safety and even the independence of Great Britain and France. This is not merely a question of giving up the German colonies, as I am sure we shall be asked to do. Nor is it a question only of losing influence in Europe. It goes far deeper than that. You have to consider the character of the Nazi movement and the rule which it implies.

"The Prime Minister desires to see cordial relations between this country and Germany. There is no difficulty at all in having cordial relations between the peoples. Our hearts go out to them. But they have no power. But never will you have friendship with the present German Government. You must have diplomatic and correct relations, but there can never be friendship between the British democracy and the Nazi power, that power which spurns Christian ethics, which cheers its onward course by barbarous paganism, which vaunts the spirit of aggression and conquest, which derives strength and perverted pleasure from persecution, and uses, as we have seen, with pitiless brutality the threat of murderous force. That power cannot ever be the trusted friend of British democracy.

"What I find unendurable is the sense of our country falling into

the power, into the orbit and influence of Nazi Germany, and of our existence becoming dependent upon their good will or pleasure. We do not want to be led upon the high road to becoming a satellite of the German Nazi system of European domination.

"I have been casting about to see how measures can be taken to protect us from this advance of the Nazi power, and to secure those forms of life which are so dear to us. What is the sole method that is open? The sole method that is open is for us to regain our old island independence by acquiring that supremacy in the air which we were promised, that security in our air defences which we were assured we had, and thus to make ourselves an island once again. That, in all this grim outlook, shines out as the overwhelming fact. An effort at re-armament the like of which has not been seen ought to be made forthwith, and all the resources of this country and all its united strength should be bent to that task.

"I do not grudge our loyal, brave people, who were ready to do their duty no matter what the cost, who never flinched under the strain of last week—I do not grudge them the natural, spontaneous outburst of joy and relief when they learned that the hard ordeal would no longer be required of them at the moment; but they should know the truth. They should know that there has been gross neglect and deficiency in our defences; they should know that we have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road; they should know that we have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged, and that the terrible words have for the time being pronounced against the Western democracies: 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.' And do not suppose this is the end.

"This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time."

With that speech I bring to a close the record of Winston Churchill's activities in the Years Between. Eleven months were to pass before the outbreak of hostilities. In March Hitler completed the annexation of Czechoslovakia, seizing what at Munich he agreed to spare. In April Mussolini took Albania as compensatory spoil for the junior partner in the Axis.

That marked the end of appeasement. Neville Chamberlain turned to the policy Winston had advocated of building up a bloc against the aggressors. Guarantees were given to Poland, Rumania and Greece, an alliance was concluded with Turkey, negotiations with Russia were set in hand. Conscription for Britain was adopted.

Hitler was not impressed by the reversal of British policy. He

reckoned that statesmen who had yielded to him once would yield again. His reading of history was that nations which had once given way before the threat of arms "will accept the greatest humiliations and exactions rather than risk a fresh appeal to force."

The Czechs were his victims in 1938. In 1939 the Poles were singled out. Having made his Eastern front secure by an agreement with Russia—the Soviet had not been convinced of the sincerity and resolution of the Allied Governments—Hitler worked up another crisis. This time there was no Munich.

On September the first, without the formality of declaring war, Germany invaded Poland. On September the third, Britain and France declared war. That very day Neville Chamberlain appointed a War Cabinet and Winston Churchill joined it as First Lord of the Admiralty.

*PHASE THE FIFTH*

*At War Again*

*Like England's better genius, born to bless,  
And snatch his sinking country from distress,  
Didst thou step forth, and without sail or oar,  
Pilot the shatter'd vessel safe to shore :  
Nor shalt thou quit, till, anchor'd firm and fast,  
She rides secure, and mocks the threatening blast !*

CHARLES CHURCHILL, The Candidate.

## CHAPTER I

### *Back at the Admiralty*

RARELY in their history have the British people been so united in going to war. In 1914 there was a considerable body of opinion that was not convinced of the rightness of the decision to fight. In 1939 dissent was negligible. The entire people was behind the Government in taking up the challenge of the Dictators.

On that September Sunday there was a sigh of almost universal relief after Neville Chamberlain had made his broadcast announcement that Britain was at war. At last, after the humiliation of Munich, we could look the world in the face once more. Now there could be no more betrayals in the name of appeasement.

With that sense of relief there was a vague feeling of anxiety. Could the Prime Minister and the other Ministers who had pursued the policy of appeasement lead the nation against the unscrupulous gangster-dictator of Germany? Were they men of such staunch courage, such inflexibility of resolve, such resourcefulness in the stratagems of war as could do battle with the perfidious Hitler?

To those who doubted the capacity of Ministers—their sincerity was not in question—the announcement that Winston Churchill had been brought back to his old post as First Lord of the Admiralty was received with a feeling of vast relief. Here was a token for our confidence. As long as Winston was there to see that things were going right, then, we felt, there was an assurance that they could not ever be going too badly.

Winston's return inspired just the same feeling of confidence that the recall of Kitchener had occasioned in 1914. It was a remarkable personal triumph that this man should have stood for so much to his fellow-countrymen. For years he had been out of office. He had been reviled for Gallipoli. The critics had spoken slightly of his judgment. His very brilliance was almost a reproach.

Yet, in the hour of need, the people turned instinctively to him. There was scarcely a newspaper in the Empire that did not join in expressing satisfaction that Winston Churchill had returned to his old key position in which he had outstanding qualifications to serve the nation.

It was not only because his foreshadowings had been fulfilled that his re-emergence in office was so universally welcomed. It was because in the hour of emergency he was known to have the capacity and experience and, above all, the character needed for the testing time of war.

The people of Germany were led by a man who had hacked his way to power by his crude stick-at-nothing vigour. Where amongst the leaders of the British people could a comparable figure be found—an honest man and yet as robust and tough? Of the British leaders where was the man of fighting spirit? In this class Neville Chamberlain, despite his tenacity of purpose, could not compete. Anthony Eden, Lord Halifax, John Simon, Archibald Sinclair and Major Attlee—none of them, despite their varying abilities, could ever be said to have shown such capacity for the ruthless drive of battle as Hitler.

Winston Churchill, alone of his generation, had fought his way through life as Hitler had done. Winston, alone, had made of life such a battle. And Winston was known to have—what Hitler was seen to lack—a deep basic strength of character that would carry him through any adversity. Winston stood out as democracy's champion against the Dictators.

His return to office was speedily accomplished. On that Sunday morning he was for the last time in his place in that House as a private member to hear the Prime Minister make his anxiously awaited announcement that the Allies were at war. It was a business-like statement, brief and unadorned, in which he permitted himself to confess his own personal sense of regret.

"It is a sad day for all of us," Neville Chamberlain said, "and for none is it sadder than for me. Everything that I wished for, everything I had hoped for, everything that I believed in during my public life has crashed into ruins. There is only one thing left for me, and that is to devote what strength and powers I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much. I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself, but I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a restored and liberated Europe has been re-established."

Winston Churchill spoke in the short debate. His rising was acclaimed from all sides of the packed House and he alone of the speakers of the day gave its emotions eloquence.

"In this solemn hour," he said, "it is a consolation to realize and dwell upon our repeated efforts for peace. All have been ill-starred, but all have been faithful and sincere. This is of the highest moral value, and not only of moral value, but of practical value at the present time, because of the whole-hearted concurrence of scores of millions of men and women whose co-operation is indispensable, whose comradeship and brotherhood is indispensable.

That is the only foundation upon which the trials and tribulations of modern war can be endured and surmounted.

"This moral conviction alone affords that ever-fresh resilience which renews the strength and energy of peoples in long and doubtful and dark days. Outside the storms of war may blow and the land may be lashed with the fury of the gale, but in our hearts this Sunday morning there is peace. Our hands may be active but our consciences are at rest.

"The Prime Minister said it was a sad day, and that indeed is true. But it seems to me there is another note which may be present at this moment. There is a feeling of thankfulness that if these trials were to come upon our island, there is a generation of Britons here now, ready to prove that it is not unworthy of the days of yore, not unworthy of those great men, the fathers of our land.

"This is no question of fighting for Danzig or fighting for Poland. We are fighting to save the world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defence of all that is most sacred to man. This is no war for domination and Imperial aggrandisement, for material gain. It is a war pure in its inherent quality, a war to establish on impregnable rocks the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man."

A little after noon that same Sunday, a Council was held by the King at Buckingham Palace at which the Rt. Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill took the oath of office and kissed hands on his appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty. At six o'clock that evening he took over in succession to Earl Stanhope.

Until late into the night he was in conference with the heads of the department, taking into his capable hands the reins familiar to his grasp a quarter of a century before. He called for the map on which he had plotted the movements of His Majesty's ships in 1914. It was still there at the Admiralty. He remained at work until the early hours and he was back at his post at 10 o'clock the following morning.

That Monday afternoon he resumed his place on the Treasury Bench. When he rose to speak he was given an ovation from all quarters of the House. Old Parliamentary hands could not remember the appearance of a new Minister evoking so long and loud a burst of applause. It was noted that after an absence of ten years from the Treasury Bench, he seemed to find the despatch box an unfamiliar place. Instead of resting his notes upon the box he held them in his hand like a back-bencher.

His first statement concerned the sinking of the liner *Athenia*, the outrage with which the Nazis opened their campaign at sea. The ship, with many Americans among her 1,400 passengers, was torpedoed 200 miles west of Ireland, within a few hours of the

opening of hostilities. "She was," said the First Lord, "torpedoed without the slightest warning in circumstances which the whole opinion of the world after the late war, in which Germany concurred, has stigmatised as inhuman."

Goebbels and his propagandists, in one of their most fantastic efforts, sought to put the blame for the *Athenia's* sinking on instructions from Winston Churchill. The reason for so transparently obvious a lie baffled all hearers.

Winston's second term of office as First Lord lasted for the first eight months of the war. It was the least publicised period of his career. Except for an occasional statement in the House or a broadcast speech, his activities were unknown to the public. Few periods of his life gave him greater cause for satisfaction. With the experience of 1914 to guide him and the ripe wisdom of the Years Between, he surrendered himself to the task of directing the war at sea. On the War Council his advice on the wider problems of strategy compelled the respect due to the only leading figure of the first great war occupying a comparable position in the second. What guidance he gave, what decisions he inspired are matters still undisclosed.

On the first day of the month of October he came to the microphone to deliver the first of the speeches which have given him an audience and a reputation that no orator has ever won before. As First Lord he did not speak with the authority that was to become his as First Minister of the Crown, but his address gave a foretaste of the radio masterpieces that were to come. Surveying the results of the first month of hostilities, by which time Poland had been overrun by the Nazi hordes, he dealt in prescient words with the position of Russia. Russia was then the target for widespread criticism for having participated in the new partition and dismemberment of Poland, but Winston did not join the chorus of critics. With a clearer vision of the reality of things he pointed out that the result of the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland was that an Eastern front had been created which Nazi Germany would not lightly dare to assail.

"When," he said, "von Ribbentrop was summoned to Moscow last week, it was to learn the fact and to accept the fact that the Nazi designs upon the Baltic States and upon the Ukraine must come to an end."

He did not pretend to be able to forecast the action of Russia. That, he epigrammatically declared, "is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma." Perhaps the key was Russian self-interest. Through the fog and confusion he could discern that there was a plain community of interests between England, France and Russia—to prevent the Nazis carrying the flames of war into the Balkans and Turkey. "Thus, my friends, at the risk of being

proved wrong by events I will proclaim my conviction that the second great fact of the first month of the war is that Hitler and all that Hitler stands for have been and are being warned off the East and South-East of Europe."

Of the successes in the campaign against the U-boats he spoke with satisfaction. "The Royal Navy is hunting them night and day—I will not say without mercy, because God forbid we should ever part company with that, but at any rate with zeal and not altogether without relish."

In his second broadcast, six weeks later, he paid a sincere tribute to Neville Chamberlain. He had now served for over two months in the Ministry and there had been much public speculation as to the relations between the Prime Minister and the candid friend who had formerly criticized him so outspokenly. There was natural curiosity whether the First Minister of the Crown and the First Lord worked harmoniously together. Doubts were now set at rest.

"You know," said Winston, "I have not always agreed with Mr. Chamberlain, though we have always been personal friends. He is a man of very tough fibre and I can tell you he is going to fight as obstinately for victory as he did for peace." In this address Winston introduced the Nazi leader to his listeners as "that evil man over there." Ribbentrop was dubbed Hitler's "bad adviser, that prodigious contortionist."

The speech radiated confidence. He did not underrate the power and malignity of our foes, but the ten weeks that had passed had enabled us to get into fighting trim and we were far stronger than we were when war was declared. If we got through the winter without any large or important event occurring we should have gained the first campaign of the war. That evil man and his cluster of confederates were not as sure of themselves as we were sure of ourselves.

"The whole world," the firm voice proclaimed from a million radio sets, "is against Hitler and Hitlerism. Men of every race and clime feel that this monstrous apparition stands between them and the forward move which is their due and for which the age is ripe. Even in Germany itself there are millions who stand aloof from the seething mass of criminality and corruption constituted by the Nazi party machine. Let them take courage amid perplexities and perils, for it may well be that the final extinction of a baleful domination will pave the way to a broader solidarity of men in all lands than we could ever have planned if we had not marched together through fire."

By December the Germans had added to the outrages of the U-boat campaign, the wanton, undiscriminating destruction of the magnetic mine, cast heedlessly and recklessly from the air on the

waters off our coasts. Winston denounced these methods of barbarism in a statement in the House (December 6). "It is," he said, "about the lowest form of warfare that can be imagined. It is the warfare of the I.R.A. leaving the bomb in the parcels office at the railway station." Perchance it was Hitler's secret weapon. Certainly it would be for ever associated with the infamy of his name. In the previous month two-thirds of the losses caused by the magnetic mine had fallen not upon belligerents but upon neutrals who had had to pay a heavy toll for remaining in friendly relations with Germany. So far as the sea was concerned, Germany's friendship had proved far more poisonous than German enmity.

There came thrilling deeds for the First Lord to announce and chronicle—the scuttling of the pocket battleship *Graf Spee* off Monte Video after the Battle of the River Plate; the attack by H.M.S. *Cossack* in a Norwegian fjord on the German prison ship *Altmark* and the freeing of 299 British prisoners.

At London's ancient Guildhall in February, he was present when the City did honour to men of the *Ajax* and *Exeter* for their part in the victory over the *Graf Spee*. "The Battle of the River Plate," he declared in one of his happiest and most homely phrases, "in a dark cold winter has warmed the cockles of our hearts." Of the achievement of the *Cossack* he remarked that to Nelson's own signal there had been now added the not less proud words, "The Navy is here"—words with which the *Cossack* announced her arrival in the fjord.

In April, the Prime Minister took advantage of a minor reconstruction in his Ministry to place Winston at the head of the Committee of Service Ministers charged with the duty of reviewing the main factors in the strategical situation and guiding the War Cabinet in the general conduct of the war.

By that month of April the war, after going to ground for the winter, had entered upon a sterner phase. On April 9, Germany invaded Norway and Denmark, breaking the unnatural calm that had prevailed. There followed a month of hazardous operations on the shores and off the coasts of Scandinavia. Aided by the original Quisling, the Germans burst into Southern Norway. They suffered considerable losses as our submarines took toll of their transports; they sacrificed half the cruisers in their Fleet; but they gained a strong foothold on land. The Allied expeditionary force coming later on the scene was at a disadvantage that was increased by lack of landing grounds from which to operate its 'planes. In the first three days of May the British forces had to withdraw from Southern Norway.

It was the opening clinch of the war and we had to admit failure. Throughout those opening months there had been a strong under-current of mistrust of the Chamberlain Government. With what-

ever zeal and tenacity of purpose the Prime Minister might devote himself to the tasks of war, he was in many eyes compromised by his appeasement past. Mistrust and dissatisfaction were brought to a head by the reverse in Norway. Of this particular campaign it was asked : why, with the German threats and preparations for an invasion of Scandinavia notorious, were the Allies forestalled ? And why, when we had been forestalled was the Allied Force not sent with less delay ? And over and above the questions arising out of the particular campaign there was anxiety to learn how the Cabinet proposed to give more vigorous and effective direction to the conduct of the war.

With the withdrawal from Southern Norway successfully completed, Ministers had to submit to a Parliamentary inquest. A two-day debate was opened by the Prime Minister on May 7. As he spoke disquieting reports came to hand from Holland, where the Dutch Government cancelled all leave for its forces.

Neville Chamberlain had to face a restive and uneasy Opposition. His speech failed to raise many cheers from his supporters, and interruptions from opponents were frequent. Mr. Attlee, who followed him, voiced the Socialists' complaints of complacency and over-optimism on the part of Ministers. Sir Archibald Sinclair urged for the Liberals the need for more foresight and energy and a more ruthless will to victory.

From the Conservative benches Leo Amery launched an attack that set the Socialists cheering. To the Chamberlain Ministry he addressed the words with which Cromwell dismissed the Long Parliament : "Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God go."

The first day's debate did not go well for the Government, but the First Lord was to wind up on the morrow, and his speech was confidently expected in what are termed Ministerial circles to satisfy and even silence the critics. But the second day opened badly for the Prime Minister.

When the debate was resumed, a bitterness absent on the first day was discernible. Herbert Morrison led off for the critics in a challenging speech. He roundly declared that the First Lord was being used as a screen by the Prime Minister, whose record with those of John Simon and Samuel Hoare he went on to attack. "We feel," he added, "we must divide the House at the end of our debate to-day."

Neville Chamberlain at once took up the challenge in a brief intervention in which he made an unhappy reference to "his friends." "I do not," he said, "seek to evade criticism, but I say to my friends in the House—and I have friends in the House—that no Government can prosecute the war efficiently unless it has public and parliamentary support. I accept the challenge and I

welcome it. Now at least we shall see who is with us and who against us. I call upon my friends to support us in the Lobbies to-night."

It was an ill-advised appeal, which the old Parliamentary hand, Lloyd George, was quick to seize upon. The situation, he said, must not be treated as a personal issue. The Prime Minister was not in a position to make his personality separable from the interests of the country.

"What," asked the Prime Minister, "is the meaning of this observation? I took pains to say that personalities ought to have no place."

Lloyd George recalled the remark, "I have my friends." It was not a question of who were the Prime Minister's friends. There was a far graver issue. The Prime Minister should remember that he had met the formidable foe in peace and war and had always been worsted. He was not in a position to put it on the grounds of friendship.

"I say solemnly," the member for Caernarvon added, "that the Prime Minister should give an example of sacrifice because I tell him that there is nothing which would contribute more to victory in this war than that he should sacrifice the seals of office."

When Winston intervened to say that he as First Lord took complete responsibility for everything that was done by the Admiralty, Lloyd George waved him aside. "I hope," he said, "that my Right Hon. friend will not allow himself to be converted into an air raid shelter to keep the splinters from hitting his colleagues."

Lloyd George's bitter personal attack was supplemented by A. V. Alexander. Winding up for the Socialists, he remarked that since the Prime Minister's intervention he had had news of more than one neutral representative in London who felt that if these matters were to be dealt with on the basis of personal friendship rather than the winning of the war, we would have done a great deal to alienate what sympathy we enjoyed in neutral spheres.

It was Winston's unenviable task as final speaker to address a House whose mind was already made up. Prejudice and passion had been aroused. Prejudice and personalities had done their work. It was too late to counter prejudice by reasoned argument and detailed examination of the evidence. It was a tactical mistake to have reserved the First Lord's speech for the close of the debate. On the first day his logic and the careful marshalling of the facts might well have swayed the House and convinced the doubters. But at that late stage it was beyond the power of eloquence to remove the painful impression of Government spokesmen who had been neither eloquent nor convincing.

The First Lord's examination of the strategic situation in Norway was exhaustive. He dealt in the frankest manner with the case for going into Trondhjem and Bergen, points to which the critics had

principally addressed themselves. The decisions which were taken were reached on the unanimous advice of the service experts—the Chiefs of Staff and their deputies.

On the broader issues, his opinion was that the decision to abandon the attack on Trondhjem saved us from a most disastrous entanglement. To have attempted to wage a major campaign from the ruins of that city would have been a forlorn operation on an ever-increasing scale. The Germans could reinforce much more quickly than we could, and there were no means by which their air superiority could be overcome.

"We must be careful," he warned the House, "not to exhaust our Air Force in view of other grave dangers which might open upon us at any time, and not to throw such strain on our flotillas and anti-aircraft auxiliaries as might hamper the general mobility of the Fleet. There are other waters we have to think of."

Having protested against the action of the Opposition in forcing from the Government statements in public which might be of benefit to the enemy, he added, "If we have decided to speak in this plain manner it is because of categorical and unworthy suggestions and actual falsehoods poured on the public in the last two days. A picture has been drawn of craven politicians hampering their Admirals and Generals in their bold designs and of myself personally over-ruling them; or that they themselves are inept or cowardly. There is being suggested—for if truth is many-sided mendacity is many-tongued—that I have personally proposed here violent action to the Prime Minister and the War Cabinet and they shrank from it and restrained me. There is not a word of truth in all that."

Towards the close of the First Lord's speech, members became impatient for the division and there was some interruption from the Opposition back benches. Winston complained that one interrupter was "skulking in a corner", at which there were protests.

"On a point of order," Mr. Maclean intervened, "is 'skulk' a parliamentary word?"

"It depends," pronounced Mr. Speaker, "whether it applies accurately or not."

When the vote was taken it was found that the Government had a majority of not more than 81 on a vote of 481. On paper in a full House the Government majority should have been in the region of 200.

Forty back benchers normally supporting the Government went into the Opposition Lobby. They included Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, Brig.-Gen. Spears, Duff Cooper, L. S. Amery, Harold Nicolson, Lord Wolmer, Lord Winterton, Hore Belisha and Richard Law, son of the former Prime Minister.

As members separated for the night the news from Holland took an even graver note.

Throughout the following day—it was Thursday, May 9—the future of the Ministry was in suspense. Neville Chamberlain immediately recognized that the fall in the Government's majority betokened such a lack of trust that it was impossible for his Ministry to continue, constituted as it was. Reconstruction on a wider all-Party basis was necessary. He summoned the Socialist leaders to 10, Downing Street and invited them and their Party to join the administration. The two leaders, Mr. Attlee and Mr. Greenwood would not give an immediate decision, but said they must consult the Executive Committee of the Party which was to meet on the morrow at Bournemouth. So the discussions were adjourned.

That night all telephone communication with Holland was reported to be cut and the Dutch Government ordered all the canal locks in the Amsterdam area to close.

Before the negotiations between Neville Chamberlain and the Socialists were resumed, the Nazis had struck. Shortly before dawn on Friday, May 10, the Germans had begun the invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. The British Expeditionary Force, vacating its prepared positions in France, began to move up to support the Belgians.

The final stages of the political crisis worked themselves out swiftly under the urgency of this greater crisis. The Socialists were not long in reaching their decision not to join a Ministry of which Neville Chamberlain was the head. On receiving their decision he immediately resigned office. Winston Churchill was summoned by the King and was entrusted with the task of forming a Ministry. The Socialists were prepared to accept his leadership, the Liberals agreed to serve in an all-Party administration, and by evening the main framework of the Administration had been evolved.

Thus did Winston Churchill, fulfilling a prophecy of 30 years before, become Prime Minister. No First Minister of the Crown ever took over the responsibility of national leadership at so grave an hour in the country's history.

## CHAPTER II

### *Prime Minister*

NEVER had a man taken office in such circumstances. Never had England's peril been so great. Never had the next unpredictable hour been so fraught with illimitable possibilities of ill. On Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, the blows of the *blitzkrieg* descended. After eight months of suspense, war in its grimdest and

most menacing shape burst upon Flanders—and Flanders is but a short flight from London.

In London the country's leaders went about the task of forming a new Ministry of all Parties with the utmost composure. Only the despatch with which the team-making was completed gave evidence of the urgency of the times.

It was on Friday, the 10th of May, that Winston Churchill kissed hands on appointment as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury. Within twenty-four hours he had announced the constitution of a War Cabinet of five members and the heads of the Service departments. He himself took the post of Defence Minister. On the Sunday more of the principal offices were filled. On the Monday the new Prime Minister presented himself to the House of Commons and delivered his historic call to service, offering in return nothing but "blood, toil, tears and sweat."

The Cabinet was completed as the Germans ended their sweep through Holland. The papers that on the Wednesday announced the final names, chronicled the "cease fire" order to the Dutch. By then the Panzer divisions had swept across Luxemburg and over the French frontier. Belgium was already deeply penetrated.

Within a week, the French position had been hopelessly compromised. General Gamelin, with a final "conquer or die" order to the troops, faded from the scene and General Weygand, recalled from Syria, was appointed Generalissimo of armies whose plight was desperate.

Map-drawers could scarcely keep pace with the German advance. Cambrai, St. Quentin, Arras, Amiens—over the old battlefields, but driving at the speed of the *blitzkrieg*, the Panzer divisions cleft their way through. When Abbeville was reached the B.E.F. had been cut off, its lines of communication severed. Crack French divisions were trapped in the severed zone. The Belgian armies were in extremest jeopardy.

It needed cool heads and staunch hearts to take up the reins of government at such an hour. Weygand had inherited a military situation that was compromised beyond redemption. Winston Churchill and his Government were faced with the loss of their Army and their Allies.

We may be thankful in Britain that this Island still breeds men and that men were at the head in that our darkest hour, men not to be daunted by the impostor of disaster. Under Winston's leadership they faced all but the loss of the war in 1940 and went serenely on with their plans for winning it in 1943.

In any days but those Winston might have felt the exquisite thrill of ambition at last realized when he succeeded to the post of First Minister of the Crown. The dangers of the times robbed him of the leisure to savour that honourable satisfaction. Only brief

expressions of congratulation greeted him when he took his seat upon the Treasury Bench that Monday afternoon in May. His inaugural speech to members was of a brevity fitting to the times—and of phrases befitting days that will live in history.

"I beg to move"—they were his first words to the House as Prime Minister, not the words that the Muse of History would choose for the commencement of his Premiership. "I beg to move that this House welcomes the formation of a Government representing the united and inflexible resolve of the nation to prosecute the war with Germany to a victorious conclusion.

"On Friday evening last I received His Majesty's Commission to form a new Administration. It was the evident wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be conceived on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties. I have completed the most important part of this task. It was necessary that this should be done in one single day, on account of the extreme urgency and rigour of events.

"To form an Administration of this scale and complexity is a serious undertaking in itself, but it must be remembered that we are in the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history, that we are in action at many other points in Norway and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, that the air battle is continuous, and that many preparations have to be made here at home.

"In this crisis I hope I may be pardoned if I do not address the House at any length to-day. I hope that any of my friends and colleagues, or former colleagues, who are affected by the political reconstruction, will make allowance, all allowance, for any lack of ceremony with which it has been necessary to act. I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this Government: 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat.'

"We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering.

"You ask, what is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy.

"You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival. Let that be realized; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal.

"But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure

that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, 'Come then, let us go forward with our united strength.' "

In the brief debate that followed the man who led the nation to victory in the last war gave his god-speed to the man who had taken up the task a generation later.

"May I be permitted," said Lloyd George, "as the Senior Member of this House, to say a few words in support of this Motion. May I, as one of the oldest friends of the Prime Minister in this House—I think on the whole that we have the longest friendship in politics, in spite of a great many differences of opinion—congratulate him personally upon his succession to the Premiership. But that is a small matter. I congratulate the country upon his elevation to the Premiership at this very, very critical and terrible moment. If I may venture to say so, I think the Sovereign exercised a wise choice. We know the right honourable Gentleman's glittering intellectual gifts, his dauntless courage, his profound study of war, and his experience in its operation and direction. They will all be needed now.

"I think it is fortunate that he should have been put in a position of supreme authority, I do not know that it is altogether a matter of personal congratulation, perhaps the reverse. He is exercising his supreme responsibility at a graver moment and in times of greater jeopardy than have ever confronted a British Minister for all time. We all, from the bottom of our hearts, wish him well. The friends of freedom and of human right through the world will wish him god-speed."

James Maxton found a phrase that day that did honour to the new Prime Minister. Having dissented from the motion before the House because it conflicted with all his political beliefs, he said: "I congratulate the Rt. Hon. Gentleman upon having achieved the highest political governmental position in the country. His personality no one can deny and—I am getting more and more fatalist—it was written in the book of fate, say perhaps on the battle-field of Blenheim, that he would one day be Prime Minister of this country and perhaps it will be a comfort that he has got it now."

The problems of forming that National Government were as delicate as the military situation was difficult. There was, to begin with, the position of the resigning Prime Minister. The Socialists had flatly declined to serve in a Government of which Neville Chamberlain was the head, and, such was the depth of their antagonism, some were reluctant to join the Ministry if he were to be a member of it. Proscriptions had been enforced when the first Coalition Government was formed in the last war and had Winston been a man of lesser calibre, Neville Chamberlain might have been proscribed by the Socialists.

In Winston Churchill, the quality of loyalty is pronounced. Neville Chamberlain had brought him back to office and now, in the hour of his fall, the ex-Prime Minister was to have the office of Lord President with a seat in the War Cabinet so that he might continue to serve in the fight against Hitlerism. One could not but recall the words of the speech in which he had announced the commencement of the war—"I cannot tell what part I may be allowed to play myself." While his health permitted, his part was considerable but he was denied his wish to see a liberated Europe re-established.

There was the problem of the party leadership. It is customary for a Conservative Prime Minister to lead the Party, but Winston would not permit Neville to surrender the position—found indeed compelling reasons why the other should continue the leadership. He wrote :

MY DEAR NEVILLE,

You have been good enough to consult me about the leadership of the Conservative Party. I am of course a Conservative, but as Prime Minister of a National Government, formed on the widest basis and comprising the three parties, I feel that it would be better for me not to undertake the leadership of one political party.

I therefore express the hope that your own leadership of our party will remain undisturbed by the change of Government or Premiership, and I feel sure that by this arrangement the cause of national unity will be best served.

The relations of perfect confidence which have grown up between us make the division of duties and responsibilities very agreeable to me.

Yours ever,  
WINSTON CHURCHILL.

It was the first demonstration of Winston's loyalty to his colleagues, loyalty that has been noted several times since. The cynic, indeed, has said that his loyalty is such that Ministerial failures are promoted rather than dismissed. Certainly we have been spared the unedifying spectacle of recrimination which sometimes, in the past, marked the supersession of the politically unfit.

The Socialist leaders before entering the Ministry should first have gained the consent of the Socialist Party. They anticipated the formality of approval. Two of their number joined the War Cabinet—Mr. Attlee (Lord Privy Seal) and Mr. Greenwood (Minister without Portfolio). A. V. Alexander succeeded Winston at the Admiralty ; Hugh Dalton was made Minister of Economic Warfare, Herbert Morrison Minister of Supply ; Ernest Bevin was called upon to leave the leadership of the Transport Workers to become an M.P. and take charge of the Labour Ministry.

Men who had worked with the Prime Minister in his anti-

appeasement campaign now received office. The Right Hon. Leopold Charles Maurice Stennett Amery became Secretary for India ; Lord Lloyd was appointed to the Colonial Office ; Duff Cooper was made Minister of Information ; Sir Henry Page Croft, translated to the Lords, was appointed Under-Secretary at the War Office. Winston's old friend, Lord Beaverbrook, who had pleaded his cause at the time of the Fisher clash, was sent to speed up the production of aircraft.

Of former members of the Chamberlain Administration, Sir John Simon vacated the Treasury for the Woolsack, no longer considering himself to have prospects to be damaged by acceptance of a peerage ; Sir Kingsley Wood took over the nation's finances ; Sir Samuel Hoare (later Lord Templewood) was despatched on embassy to Spain. Lord Halifax continued to direct the affairs of the Foreign Office, until, on the death of Lord Lothian, he was selected as His Majesty's Ambassador to Washington and Anthony Eden was transferred from the War Office to succeed him.

Nine days after kissing hands, Winston came to the microphone to speak for the first time as Prime Minister, and to give an account of the battle raging in France and Flanders. It was a sombre speech, calling for endurance to the ordeal that lay ahead and for unremitting labour to provide the fighting forces with the arms and the munitions they needed.

"We must expect," he said, "that as soon as stability is reached on the Western Front, the bulk of that hideous apparatus of aggression which gashed Holland into ruin and slavery in a few days, will be turned upon us. I am sure I speak for all when I say we are ready to face it ; to endure it ; and to retaliate against it—to any extent that the unwritten laws of war permit. There will be many men, and many women, in this island who, when the ordeal comes upon them, will feel comfort, and even a pride that they are sharing the perils of our lads at the Front—soldiers, sailors and airmen, God bless them—and are drawing away from them a part at least of the onslaught they have to bear."

"Our task is not only to win the battle—but to win the war. After this battle in France abates its force, there will come the battle for our island—for all that Britain is, and all that Britain means. That will be the struggle. In that supreme emergency we shall not hesitate to take every step, even the most drastic, to call forth from our people the last ounce and the last inch of effort of which they are capable. The interests of property, the hours of labour, are nothing compared with the struggle for life and honour, for right and freedom, to which we have vowed ourselves."

"Having received His Majesty's commission, I have formed an administration of men and women of every party and of almost every point of view. We have differed and quarrelled in the past ;

but now one bond unites us all—to wage war until victory is won, and never to surrender ourselves to servitude and shame, whatever the cost and the agony may be. This is one of the most awe-striking periods in the long history of France and Britain. It is also beyond doubt the most sublime.

“Side by side, unaided except by their kith and kin in the great Dominions and by the wide Empires which rest beneath their shield—side by side, the British and French peoples have advanced to rescue not only Europe but mankind from the foulest and most soul-destroying tyranny which has ever darkened and stained the pages of history. Behind them—behind us—behind the armies and fleets of Britain and France—gather a group of shattered States and bludgeoned races : the Czechs, the Poles, the Norwegians, the Danes, the Dutch, the Belgians—upon all of whom the long night of barbarism will descend, unbroken even by a star of hope, unless we conquer, as conquer we must ; as conquer we shall.

“To-day is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of Truth and Justice :

“Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valour, and be in readiness for the conflict ; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the Will of God is in Heaven, even so let it be.”

On 23 May the Prime Minister in a brief statement to the House of Commons announced the fall of Abbeville, and the penetration of the enemy to the rear of the Allied lines. On 28 May he made another brief statement on the capitulation of King Leopold of the Belgians. They were menacing blows, but the House was warned to prepare for “hard and heavy tidings.”

Throughout the last week of that month of May the people watched with anxious hearts as the British Expeditionary Force, no longer supported by the Belgians, cut off from the French, fought that stubborn rearguard action to the last. There followed the evacuation from the beaches of Dunkirk—a matchless feat of arms and a miracle of deliverance. From his place in the House, Winston unfolded the drama of that escape from the jaws of the enemy in a speech whose eloquence befitting the heroic narrative. The deliverance of Dunkirk will be the theme for many a story-teller for years to come, but the tale will never be more magnificently told than Winston told it that day. He said :

“From the moment that the French defences at Sedan and on the Meuse were broken at the end of the second week of May, only a rapid retreat to Amiens and the south could have saved the British and French Armies, who had entered Belgium at the appeal of the Belgian King. But this strategic fact was not immediately realized. The French High Command hoped they would be able to close the

gap, and the armies of the north were under their orders. Moreover, a retirement of this kind would have involved almost certainly the destruction of the fine Belgian Army of over twenty divisions and the abandonment of the whole of Belgium.

"Therefore, when the force and scope of the German penetration were realized, and when a new French Generalissimo, General Weygand, assumed command in place of General Gamelin, an effort was made by the French and British armies in Belgium to keep on holding the right hand of the Belgians and to give their own right hand to a newly-created French army which was to have advanced across the Somme in great strength to grasp it.

"However, the German eruption swept like a sharp scythe around the right and rear of the armies of the north. Eight or nine armoured divisions, each of about four hundred armoured vehicles of different kinds, but carefully assorted to be complementary and divisible into small self-contained units, cut off all communications between us and the main French armies. It severed our own communications for food and ammunition, which ran first to Amiens and afterwards through Abbeville, and it shore its way up the coast to Boulogne and Calais, and almost to Dunkirk. Behind this armoured and mechanized onslaught came a number of German divisions in lorries, and behind them again there plodded, comparatively slowly, the dull, brute mass of the ordinary German Army and German people, always so ready to be led to the trampling down in other lands of liberties and comforts which they have never known in their own.

"I have said this armoured scythe-stroke almost reached Dunkirk—almost, but not quite. Boulogne and Calais were the scenes of desperate fighting. The Guards defended Boulogne for a while and were then withdrawn by orders from this country. The Rifle Brigade, the 60th Rifles, and the Queen Victoria's Rifles, with a battalion of British tanks and 1,000 Frenchmen, in all about 4,000 strong, defended Calais to the last.

"The British Brigadier was given an hour to surrender. He spurned the offer, and four days of intense street fighting passed before silence reigned over Calais, which marked the end of a memorable resistance. Only thirty unwounded survivors were brought off by the Navy, and we do not know the fate of their comrades. Their sacrifice, however, was not in vain. At least two armoured divisions, which otherwise would have been turned against the British Expeditionary Force, had to be sent forward to overcome them. They have added another page to the glories of light divisions, and the time gained enabled the Gravelines waterlines to be flooded and to be held by the French troops.

"Thus it was that the port of Dunkirk was kept open. When it was found impossible for the armies of the north to reopen their

communications to Amiens with the main French armies, only one choice remained. It seemed, indeed, forlorn. The Belgian, British and French armies were almost surrounded. Their sole line of retreat was to a single port and to its neighbouring beaches.<sup>1</sup> They were pressed on every side by heavy attacks and far outnumbered in the air.

"When a week ago I asked the House to fix this afternoon as the occasion for a statement, I feared it would be my hard lot to announce the greatest military disaster in our long history. I thought—and some good judges agreed with me—that perhaps 20,000 or 30,000 men might be re-embarked. But it certainly seemed that the whole of the French First Army and the whole of the British Expeditionary Force north of the Amiens-Abbeville gap, would be broken up in the open field or else would have to capitulate for lack of food and ammunition. These were the hard and heavy tidings for which I called upon the House and the nation to prepare themselves a week ago. The whole root and core and brain of the British Army, on which and around which we were to build, and are to build, the great British armies in the later years of the war, seemed about to perish upon the field or to be led into an ignominious and starving captivity.

"That was the prospect a week ago. But another blow which might well have proved final was yet to fall upon us. The King of the Belgians had called upon us to come to his aid. Had not this ruler and his Government severed themselves from the Allies, who rescued their country from extinction in the late war, and had they not sought refuge in what has proved to be a fatal neutrality, the French and British Armies might well at the outset have saved not only Belgium but perhaps even Poland.

"Yet at the last moment, when Belgium was already invaded, King Leopold called upon us to come to his aid, and even at the last moment we came. He and his brave, efficient army, nearly half a million strong, guarded our eastern flank and thus kept open our only line of retreat to the sea. Suddenly, without prior consultation, with the least possible notice, without the advice of his Ministers and upon his own personal act, he sent a plenipotentiary to the German Command, surrendered his army, and exposed our whole flank and means of retreat.<sup>1</sup>

"The surrender of the Belgian Army compelled the British at the shortest notice to cover a flank to the sea more than thirty miles in length. Otherwise all would have been cut off, and all would have shared the fate to which King Leopold had condemned the finest army his country had ever formed. So in doing this and in exposing

<sup>1</sup> With the passage of time, fuller knowledge has placed King Leopold in a more favourable light and Mr. Eden has since paid tribute to the manner in which he has resolutely declined to co-operate with the invaders of his country.

this flank, as anyone who followed the operations on the map will see, contact was lost between the British and two out of the three corps forming the First French Army, who were still further from the coast than we were, and it seemed impossible that any large number of Allied troops could reach the coast.

"The enemy attacked on all sides with great strength and fierceness, and their main power, the power of their far more numerous air force, was thrown into the battle or else concentrated upon Dunkirk and the beaches. Pressing in upon the narrow exit, both from the east and from the west, the enemy began to fire with cannon upon the beaches by which alone the shipping could approach or depart.

"They sowed magnetic mines in the channels and seas ; they sent repeated waves of hostile aircraft, sometimes more than one hundred strong in one formation, to cast their bombs upon the single pier that remained, and upon the sand dunes upon which the troops had their eyes for shelter. Their U-boats, one of which was sunk, and their motor launches took their toll of the vast traffic which now began. For four or five days an intense struggle reigned. All their armoured divisions—or what was left of them—together with great masses of German infantry and artillery, hurled themselves in vain upon the ever-narrowing, ever-contracting appendix within which the British and French Armies fought.

"Meanwhile, the Royal Navy, with the willing help of countless merchant seamen, strained every nerve to embark the British and Allied troops. Two hundred and twenty light warships and 650 other vessels were engaged. They had to operate upon the difficult coast, often in adverse weather, under an almost ceaseless hail of bombs and an increasing concentration of artillery fire. Nor were the seas, as I have said, themselves free from mines and torpedoes.

"It was in conditions such as these that our men carried on, with little or no rest, for days and nights on end, making trip after trip across the dangerous waters, bringing with them always men whom they had rescued. The numbers they have brought back are the measure of their devotion and their courage. The hospital ships, which brought off many thousands of British and French wounded, being so plainly marked were a special target for Nazi bombs ; but the men and women on board them never faltered in their duty.

"Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force, which had already been intervening in the battle, so far as its range would allow, from home bases, now used part of its main metropolitan fighter strength, and struck at the German bombers, and at the fighters which in large numbers protected them. This struggle was protracted and fierce.

"Suddenly the scene cleared, the crash and thunder for the moment—but only for the moment—died away. A miracle of deliverance, achieved by valour, by perseverance, by perfect dis-

cipline, by faultless service, by resource, by skill, by unconquerable fidelity, is manifest to us all. The enemy was hurled back by the retreating British and French troops. He was so roughly handled that he did not harry their departure seriously.

"The Royal Air Force engaged the main strength of the German Air Force, and inflicted upon them losses of at least four to one ; and the Navy, using nearly 1,000 ships of all kinds, carried over 335,000 men, French and British, out of the jaws of death and shame, to their native land and to the tasks which lie immediately ahead.

"We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations. But there was a victory inside this deliverance, which should be noted. It was gained by the Air Force. Many of our soldiers coming back have not seen the Air Force at work ; they saw only the bombers which escaped its protective attack. They underrated its achievement. I have heard much talk of this ; that is why I go out of my way to say this. I will tell you about it.

"This was a great trial of strength between the British and German Air Forces. Can you conceive a greater objective for the Germans in the air than to make evacuation from these beaches impossible, and to sink all these ships which were displayed, almost to the extent of thousands ? Could there have been an objective of greater military importance and significance for the whole purpose of the war than this ? They tried hard, and they were beaten back ; they were frustrated in their task. We got the Army away ; and they have paid fourfold for any losses which they have inflicted.

"Very large formations of German aeroplanes—and we know that they are a very brave race—have turned on several occasions from the attack of one-quarter of their number of the Royal Air Force, and have dispersed in different directions. Twelve aeroplanes have been hunted by two. One aeroplane was driven into the water and cast away by the mere charge of a British aeroplane, which had no more ammunition. All of our types—the Hurricane, the Spitfire, and the new Defiant—and all our pilots have been vindicated as superior to what they have at present to face.

"When we consider how much greater would be our advantage in defending the air above this island against an overseas attack, I must say that I find in these facts a sure basis upon which practical and reassuring thoughts may rest. I will pay my tribute to these young airmen. The great French Army was very largely, for the time being, cast back and disturbed by the onrush of a few thousands of armoured vehicles. May it not also be that the cause of civilization itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of a few thousand airmen ?

"There never had been, I suppose, in all the world, in all the

history of war, such an opportunity for youth. The Knights of the Round Table, the Crusaders, all fall back into a prosaic past : not only distant but prosaic : but these young men going forth every morn to guard their native land and all that we stand for, holding in their hands these instruments of colossal and shattering power, of whom it may be said that

*Every morn brought forth a noble chance,  
And every chance brought forth a noble knight,*

deserve our gratitude, as do all the brave men who, in so many ways and on so many occasions, are ready, and continue ready, to give life and all for their native land.

“I return to the Army. In the long series of very fierce battles, now on this front, now on that, fighting on three fronts at once, battles fought by two or three divisions against an equal or somewhat larger number of the enemy, and fought fiercely on some of the old grounds that so many of us knew so well, in these battles our losses in men have exceeded 30,000 killed, wounded and missing. I take occasion to express the sympathy of the House to all who have suffered bereavement or who are still anxious. The President of the Board of Trade (Sir Andrew Duncan) is not here to-day. His son has been killed, and many in the House have felt the pangs of affliction in the sharpest form.

“But I will say this about the missing. We have had a large number of wounded come home safely to this country—the greater part—but I would say about the missing that there may be very many reported missing who will come back home, some day, in one way or another. In the confusion of this fight it is inevitable that many have been left in positions where honour required no further resistance from them.

“Against this loss of over 30,000 men, we can set a far heavier loss certainly inflicted upon the enemy. But our losses in material are enormous. We have perhaps lost one-third of the men we lost in the opening days of the battle of 21 March, 1918, but we have lost nearly as many guns—nearly 1,000 guns—and all our transport, all the armoured vehicles that were with the army in the North. This loss will impose a further delay on the expansion of our military strength. That expansion had not been proceeding as fast as we had hoped. The best of all we had to give had gone to the British Expeditionary Force, and although they had not the numbers of tanks and some articles of equipment which were desirable, they were a very well and finely equipped army. They had the first-fruits of all that our industry had to give, and that is gone. And now here is this further delay. How long it will be, how long it will last, depends upon the exertions which we make in this island.

"An effort the like of which has never been seen in our records is now being made. Work is proceeding everywhere, night and day, Sundays and week-days. Capital and labour have cast aside their interests, rights, and customs and put them into the common stock. Already the flow of munitions has leapt forward. There is no reason why we should not in a few months overtake the sudden and serious loss that has come upon us, without retarding the development of our general programme.

"Nevertheless, our thankfulness at the escape of our Army and so many men whose loved ones have passed through an agonizing week must not blind us to the fact that what has happened in France and Belgium is a colossal military disaster. The French Army has been weakened, the Belgian Army has been lost, a large part of those fortified lines upon which so much faith has been reposed is gone, many valuable mining districts and factories have passed into the enemy's possession, the whole of the Channel ports are in his hands, with all the tragic consequences that follow from that, and we must expect another blow to be struck almost immediately at us or at France.

"We are told that Herr Hitler has plans for invading the British Isles. This has often been thought of before. When Napoleon lay at Boulogne for a year with his flat-bottomed boats and his Grand Army, he was told by someone, 'There are bitter weeds in England.' There are certainly a great many more of them since the British Expeditionary Force returned.

"There has never been a period in all these long centuries of which we boast when an absolute guarantee against invasion, still less against serious raids, could have been given to our people. In the days of Napoleon, the same wind which would have carried his transports across the Channel might have driven away the blockading fleet. There was always the chance, and it is that chance which has excited and befooled the imaginations of many Continental tyrants.

"Many are the tales that are told. We are assured that novel methods will be adopted, and when we see the originality of malice, the ingenuity of aggression, which our enemy displays, we may certainly prepare ourselves for every kind of novel stratagem and every kind of brutal and treacherous manoeuvre. I think that no idea is so outlandish that it should not be considered and viewed with a searching, but at the same time, I hope, with a steady eye. We must never forget the solid assurances of sea power and those which belong to air power if it can be locally exercised.

"I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone. At any rate,

that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty's Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation.

"Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail, we shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, and we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills ; we shall never surrender. Even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the Old."<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER III

### *The Fall of France*

"If necessary for years, if necessary alone"—how many besides the Prime Minister's immediate hearers noticed that "alone" and realized its significance ? France, by then, was *in extremis*. Her armies were in retreat. The population of the ravaged provinces were panic-stricken, on the roads. Paris was menaced. Reynaud's Cabinet was riddled with intrigue. The spirit of defeatism was spreading with the speed and virulence of the plague.

The lack of resolution that had infected the French leaders was known in London. In those final days Winston made hurried visits across the Channel to attempt to impart some of his own staunchness to the French. He flew to Paris on 22 May for a hurried meeting with Reynaud. A week later, when the position had grown yet more desperate, a meeting of the Supreme War Council—the last to be held—met in the French capital. Winston was accompanied by Mr. Attlee, Sir John Dill (C.I.G.S.), General Ismay and General Spears. Pétain, Weygand and Darlan were present with Reynaud—

<sup>1</sup> The street by street idea was previously conceived by Winston during his Antwerp adventure, a quarter of a century previously. Lord Riddell noted in his Diary : "Winston visited the outskirts of the town and evinced great bravery in face of the shower of German shells." Later he said : "I am quite clear. This town must be defended to the last ; the troops must fight street by street if necessary."

Pétain, who was an admirer of the Fascist system, Weygand, who had no heart for the fight, and Darlan, whose capabilities in Quisling's role were as yet unsuspected. After the meeting a statement was issued proclaiming that full agreement had been reached on the measures that the situation called for. "The Allied Governments and people," it was added, "are more than ever implacably resolved to pursue, in all possible concord, their present struggle until victory is achieved." Implacable resolution—it could only be true if the surplus in Britain were shared out to make good the deficiencies of the French.

One painful discovery Winston made on that visit. One of his first inquiries of the French leader was: "What are you going to do with your masses of manœuvre, or General Reserve?" With surprise and alarm he learned that a General Reserve did not exist. It would have to be created by drawing upon different parts of the Line.

There was no stopping the German advance. Men cannot fight machines. The infantryman is at the mercy of the tank. The heroism of the French soldier could not make up for the omissions of his leaders who had neglected to provide the mechanized instruments of modern war. On 10 June the enemy were almost at the gates of Paris. It was then that the Jackal of Italy, scenting spoils from afar, decided to enter the war.

That evening Reynaud broadcast an appeal for aid to the sister republic of the United States.

"The enemy," he declared, "is almost at the gates of Paris. We shall fight before Paris, fight behind Paris, shut ourselves up in one of our provinces and, if they drive us out, go to North Africa and if need be to our American possessions. At the hour I am speaking to you, another dictatorship has just struck France from behind. I beg you to declare publicly that the United States will give the Allies by every means their moral and material support without an expeditionary force. I beg you to do so before it is too late."

The President, whose second term of office was approaching its termination, was not then in a position to respond to this appeal.

Winston sent the French Premier a message pledging maximum British support to the French armies battling with such undaunted courage. "All available means are being used," he wrote, "to give help on land and sea and in the air. The R.A.F. has been continually engaged over the battlefields and within the past few days fresh British forces have landed in France to take their place with those engaged in the common struggle, whilst further extensive reinforcements are being organized and will be rapidly available."

On the 12th the Government Departments and Diplomatic Corps left Paris for the Provinces. The capital was declared an open town. The French had not the stomach to fight the enemy

street by street and house by house through Paris as the Russians prepared to do in Leningrad in September 1941. The Government fled to Tours, pursued by the German bombers.

In response to an urgent request from the French, Winston, on the 13th, flew to Tours, accompanied by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, and the Minister for Aircraft Production, Lord Beaverbrook. They found the French Ministers in the uttermost dejection. Weygand was counselling giving up the fight. Chautemps was for peace, Baudouin was for peace. And from his mistress, the intriguing Hélène de Portes, Reynaud for days past had heard argument and pleading for peace.

At the Préfecture at Tours, Reynaud made a frank and gloomy statement on the position of the French armies. In the dire straits to which they were reduced he did not see that the struggle could be continued. Would the British release them from the undertaking not to negotiate a separate Armistice?

"Although," said Winston in the account he gave to Parliament of the meeting, "although I knew how great the French sufferings were and that we had not so far endured equal trials or made an equal contribution in the field, I felt bound to say that I could not consent. I saw there would be no use in adding mutual reproaches to the other miseries we might have to bear, but I could not consent."

The British Ministers prevailed upon the French to continue the fight for a few more days while one more appeal was made to the United States. If the reply from America was not sufficient for M. Reynaud to go on, then a further conference would be held.

On the evening of the 13th, Reynaud broadcast his last desperate appeal for aid to free men of the world, of whom the French Army was but the advance guard. "We know," he said, "what admiration the world has for France, but now France has the right to turn round and speak to the other democracies. She has the right to say to them: 'It is your turn now.'

"I have asked President Roosevelt repeatedly to extend American help to the Allies so far as is possible within the laws of the United States. To-night I address to him the last appeal. It is no longer the time for half-hearted measures. The struggle is now for France's very life. The heroism of the armies of Dunkirk has been surpassed in the fighting which now rages from the sea to the Argonne. All that, as well as the sufferings and the pride of France must now be told. Everywhere on the earth free men must know what they owe to her. The hour has now come for them to pay their debt."

On the morrow the Germans entered Paris. The Nazi tanks drove past the Arc de Triomphe. The Swastika flag flew from the Tour Eiffel. The Seine was crossed, Le Havre was taken, the Maginot Line was pierced. This day it was announced that in

implementation of the British Prime Minister's pledge, a new B.E.F. had arrived in France with complete equipment. A new assurance of aid was sent to the French. Its language betrayed its authorship.

"We take this opportunity," it stated, "of proclaiming the indissoluble union of our two peoples and of our two Empires. We cannot measure the various forms of tribulation which will fall upon our people in the near future. We are only sure that the new ordeal by fire will only fuse them together in one unconquerable whole. We renew to the French republic our pledge and resolve to continue the struggle, at all costs, in France, in this island, upon the oceans and in the air, wherever it may lead us, sharing together the burden of repairing the ravages of war. We shall never turn from the conflict until France stands safe and erect in all her grandeur, until the wronged and enslaved States have been liberated and until civilization is free from the nightmare of Nazidom. That this day will dawn we are more sure than ever. It may dawn sooner than we have the right to expect."

Had the reply from America been in similar terms, the fate of France might have been different, the course of the war profoundly changed. The President's heart was with France in her heart-rending hour—but only Congress could sanction what France needed. "I can assure you," ran the Presidential response, "that so long as the French people continue in the defence of liberty, so long will they rest assured that material supplies will be sent to them from the United States in ever-increasing quantities and kinds. I know you will understand that these statements carry with them no implication of military commitments. Only Congress can make such commitments."

It was a chilling postscript—"Only Congress can make such commitments."

Reynaud, now removed with his colleagues to Bordeaux, where distance gave them no immunity from Nazi bombers, could not regard that reply as sufficient to enable him to overcome the spirit of defeat. He sent a message to the British Prime Minister renewing his application for France to be released from the pledge not to enter upon separate Armistice negotiations.

The Sixteenth of June, 1940, was the fateful day.

In London British Ministers met early. "We sent a message to the French," stated Winston later, "of which I do not give the exact text, but I give the general substance. Separate negotiations, whether for Armistice or peace, depend upon an agreement made with the French Republic and not with any particular French administration or statesman. They, therefore, involve the honour of France.

"However, in view of all they had suffered and of the forces evidently working upon them, and provided that the French Fleet

is despatched to British ports and remains there while the negotiations are conducted, His Majesty's Government will give their consent to the French Government asking what terms of Armistice would be open to them. It was also made clear that His Majesty's Government were resolved to continue the war, and disassociated themselves from such inquiries about an Armistice."

A further communication was made to the French—an offer by Britain for the amalgamation of the two States by solemn act of union. It was a bold and dramatic appeal—a union of Empires, Cabinets and Parliaments. The suggested joint declaration was in the following terms :

"At this most fateful moment in the history of the modern world the Governments of the United Kingdom and the French Republic make this declaration of indissoluble union and unyielding resolution in their common defence of justice and freedom, against subjection to a system which reduces mankind to a life of robots and slaves.

"The two Governments declare that France and Great Britain shall no longer be two nations but one Franco-British Union. The constitution of the Union will provide for joint organs of defence, foreign, financial, and economic policies. Every citizen of France will enjoy immediately citizenship of Great Britain, every British subject will become a citizen of France.

"Both countries will share responsibility for the repair of the devastation of war, wherever it occurs in their territories, and the resources of both shall be equally, and as one, applied to that purpose.

"During the war there shall be a single War Cabinet, and all the forces of Britain and France, whether on land, sea, or in the air, will be placed under its direction. It will govern from wherever it best can. The two Parliaments will be formally associated.

"The nations of the British Empire are already forming new armies. France will keep her available forces in the field, on the sea, and in the air.

"The Union appeals to the United States to fortify the economic resources of the Allies and to bring her powerful material aid to the common cause.

"The Union will concentrate its whole energy against the power of the enemy no matter where the battle may be. And thus we shall conquer."

It was bold and dramatic but it was too late. It was beyond Reynaud's competence to defeat the enemies within his own Cabinet. The British Declaration was dismissed. It was defeated by a phrase—it was only an attempt, the defeatists said, to make France a British Dominion. In the morning the Cabinet at Bor-

deaux by the narrow margin of 13 to 11 were for continuing the war. At night the figures were reversed—13 to 11 against Reynaud fell and with Reynaud the tattered flag of France came down. Pétain became Premier, the aged Pétain, veteran of 84, the admirer of the Fascist system.

News of Reynaud's fall reached London as Winston was about to leave for Bordeaux. "I was," he stated, "in the train when I received news that M. Reynaud had been overthrown and that a new Government under Marshal Pétain had been formed, which Government had been formed for the prime purpose of seeking an Armistice with Germany. In these circumstances, we naturally did everything in our power to secure proper arrangements for the disposition of the French Fleet. We reminded the new Government that the condition indispensable to their release had not been complied with, the condition being that it should be sent to a British port. There was plenty of time to do it, and it would have made no difference to the negotiations; the terms could hardly have been more severe than they were."

"In order to reinforce the earnestness with which we held our views, we sent the First Sea Lord and the First Lord, as well as Lord Lloyd, to establish what contacts were possible with the new Ministers. Everything was, of course, fusing into collapse at that time, but many solemn assurances were given that the Fleet would never be allowed to fall into German hands."

On the morrow the aged Pétain pronounced the fateful decision. "It is with a heavy heart," he said in his broadcast to the people of France, "that I say we must cease the fight. I have applied to our opponent to ask him if he is ready to sign with me, as between soldiers after the fight and in honour, a means to put an end to hostilities." It was the first step to the capitulation of Compiègne.

The defection of France was a heavy blow. The people of Britain were now left to continue the struggle alone. There was no wincing, no wavering. The spirit of the nation was as indomitable as the leadership of the Prime Minister. France had fallen and they asked, in the idiom of the hour—"So what?"

The Prime Minister, in a speech to the House of Commons, summed up the chances of the future in words of the highest inspiration.

"It seems clear," he said, "that no invasion on a scale beyond the capacity of our land forces to crush speedily is likely to take place from the air until our Air Force has been definitely over-powered. In the meantime, there may be raids by parachute troops and attempted descents of airborne soldiers. We should be able to give those gentry a warm reception both in the air and if they reach the ground in any condition to continue the dispute. But the great question is: Can we break Hitler's air weapon?

"Of course, it is a very great pity that we have not got an Air Force at least equal to that of the most powerful enemy within striking distance of these shores. But we have a very powerful Air Force which has proved itself far superior in quality, both in men and in many types of machine, to what we have met so far in the numerous fierce air battles which have been fought. In France, where we were at a considerable disadvantage and lost many machines on the ground, we were accustomed to inflict losses of as much as two to two and a half to one. In the fighting over Dunkirk, which was a sort of no man's land, we undoubtedly beat the German Air Force, and this gave us the mastery locally in the air, and we inflicted losses of three or four to one. Anyone who looks at the photographs which were published a week or so ago of the re-embarkation, showing the masses of troops assembled on the beach and forming an ideal target for hours at a time, must realize that this re-embarkation would not have been possible unless the enemy had resigned all hope of recovering air superiority at that point.

"In the defence of this island the advantages of the defenders will be very great. We hope to improve on the rate of three or four to one which was realized at Dunkirk, and in addition all our injured machines and their crews which get down safely—and, surprisingly, a very great many injured machines and men do get down safely in modern air fighting—all of these will fall, in an attack upon these islands, on friendly soil and live to fight another day, whereas all injured enemy machines and their complements will be total losses as far as the war is concerned.

"During the great battle in France, we gave very powerful and continuous aid to the French Army both by fighters and bombers, but in spite of every kind of pressure we never would allow the entire metropolitan strength of the Air Force, in fighters, to be consumed. This decision was painful, but it was also right, because the fortunes of the battle in France could not have been decisively affected, even if we had thrown in our entire fighting force. The battle was lost by the unfortunate strategical opening, by the extraordinary and unforeseen power of the armoured columns, and by the great preponderance of the German Army in numbers. Our fighter Air Force might easily have been exhausted as a mere accident in that great struggle, and we should have found ourselves at the present time in a very serious plight.

"As it is, I am happy to inform the House that our fighter air strength is stronger at the present time, relatively to the Germans, who have suffered terrible losses, than it has ever been, and consequently we believe ourselves to possess the capacity to continue the war in the air under better conditions than we have ever experienced before. I look forward confidently to the exploits of

our fighter pilots, who will have the glory of saving their native land, their island home, and all they love, from the most deadly of all attacks.

"There remains the danger of bombing attacks, which will certainly be made very soon upon us by the bomber forces of the enemy. It is true that the German bomber force is superior in numbers to ours, but we have a very large bomber force also which we shall use to strike at military targets in Germany without intermission. I do not at all underrate the severity of the ordeal which lies before us, but I believe our countrymen will show themselves capable of standing up to it, like the brave men of Barcelona, and will be able to stand up to it, and carry on in spite of it, at least as well as any other people in the world. Much will depend upon this, and every man and every woman will have the chance to show the finest qualities of their race and render the highest service to their cause. For all of us at this time, whatever our sphere, our station, our occupation, our duties, it will be a help to remember the famous lines :

*He nothing common did or mean,  
Upon that memorable scene.*

"I have thought it right upon this occasion to give the House and the country some indication of the solid, practical grounds upon which we base our inflexible resolve to continue the war, and I can assure them that our professional advisers of the three Services unitedly advise that we should do so, and that there are good and reasonable hopes of final victory. We have also fully informed and consulted all the self-governing Dominions, and I have received from their Prime Ministers, Mr. Mackenzie King, Mr. Menzies, Mr. Fraser, and General Smuts, messages couched in the most moving terms in which they endorse our decision and declare themselves ready to share our fortunes and to persevere to the end.

"In casting up this dread balance-sheet, contemplating our dangers with a disillusioned eye, I see great reason for intense vigilance and exertion, but none whatever for panic or despair. During the first four years of the last war the Allies experienced, as my right hon. friend opposite, the Member for Caernarvon Boroughs (Mr. Lloyd George), will remember, nothing but disaster and disappointment, and yet at the end their morale was higher than that of the Germans, who had moved from one aggressive triumph to another. During that war we repeatedly asked ourselves the question, 'How are we going to win?' and no one was able ever to answer it with much precision, until at the end, quite suddenly, quite unexpectedly, our terrible foe collapsed before us, and we were so glutted with victory that in our folly we cast it away.

"What General Weygand called the 'Battle of France' is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us.

"Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands ; but if we fail then the whole world, including the United States, and all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new dark age made more sinister, and perhaps more prolonged, by the lights of a perverted science.

"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duty and so bear ourselves that if the British Commonwealth and Empire lasts for a thousand years men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.' "

The defection of France, the loss of the aid of the French armies and of the French airmen was grievous. But these were just erasions from the balance sheet of Allied assets. The future of the French Fleet was invested with even graver possibilities. So far from being a mere loss it might be an asset transferred from the credit to the debit side, if the Germans, by wheedling or by threats, could gain the possession or use of it. The Pétain Government, in taking office, gave solemn assurance that never should their Navy fall into German hands. Despite this undertaking, they entered into an Armistice under Article Eight of which they were required to collect their vessels into ports to be demobilized and disarmed under German or Italian control. There were other terms in this Armistice which should have had no place in an agreement made "as between soldiers after the fight and in honour."

The British Government, in a public statement of protest, recorded their grief and amazement at the terms the Men of Bordeaux had accepted. Such terms could not have been submitted to by any French Government which possessed freedom, independence and constitutional authority.

"Such terms," said the statement, "if accepted by all Frenchmen would place not only France, but the French Empire, entirely at the mercy and in the power of the German and Italian dictators. Not only would the French people be held down and forced to work against their Ally, but the whole resources of the French Empire and the French Navy would speedily pass into the hands of the adversary for the fulfilment of that purpose."

On 18 June, General de Gaulle, director of Reynaud's Military Cabinet, who had made his way to London, broadcast to the people of France and protested against the surrender. He became the focal point for the continuance of French resistance.

He promoted the establishment of a Provincial French National Committee to work for the recovery of France's independence.

Recognition was accorded to the de Gaulle Committee by the British Government and the French people were so informed in a statement broadcast to them on 23 June. Britain, the statement said, no longer regarded the Bordeaux Government as the Government of an independent country. Britain would recognize the French National Committee "and will deal with them in all matters concerning the prosecution of the war so long as the Committee continues to represent French elements resolved to fight the common enemy."

The aged Marshal broadcast his reply. He feared, he said, that the fate that had overtaken France might next befall Britain. "Mr. Churchill," he added, "is a good judge of his own country's interest, but not of ours, still less of French honour."

It was in these circumstances that the Prime Minister had to consider what was to be done about the French Fleet, the second most powerful in Europe.

An indication of the callous indifference of the Men of Bordeaux towards claims of honour, was furnished by the release of 400 German air pilots who were prisoners in France. Reynaud had given his word that they should be sent to England for safe keeping, but the Men of Bordeaux, to curry favour with their German masters, delivered them over to the Nazis.

The French warships might be similarly delivered up. What was to be done? "Never in my experience," said Winston in his account of the action that was taken, "never have I seen so grim and sombre a question as what we were to do about the French Fleet discussed in a Cabinet. It shows how strong were the reasons for the course which we thought it our duty to take, that every member of the Cabinet had the same conviction about what should be done and there was not the slightest hesitation or divergence among them, and that the three Service Ministers, as well as men like the Minister of Information (Mr. Duff Cooper) and the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Lloyd), particularly noted for their long friendship with France, when they were consulted were equally convinced that no other decision than that which we took was possible. We took that decision, and it was a decision to which, with aching hearts but with clear vision, we unitedly came."

French warships in our ports were taken under our control. Those at Alexandria were ordered not to leave under peril of being sunk. At the North African port of Oran more drastic action had unfortunately to be taken. After a day of parleys with the French Commander, who declined either to throw in his lot with the British or to sail the ships across the Atlantic to be demobilized, a British squadron under Admiral Somerville carried out its orders

to sink them. The results were made known in a statement by the Prime Minister on 4 July in which he said :

"Admiral Gensoul refused to comply and announced his intention of fighting. Admiral Somerville was therefore ordered to complete his mission before darkness fell, and at 5.53 p.m. he opened fire upon this powerful French Fleet, which was also protected by its shore batteries. At 6 p.m. he reported that he was heavily engaged. The action lasted for some ten minutes and was followed by heavy attacks from our naval aircraft, carried in the *Ark Royal*. At 7.20 p.m. Admiral Somerville forwarded a further report, which stated that a battle-cruiser of the *Strasbourg* class was damaged and ashore ; that a battleship of the *Bretagne* class had been sunk, that another of the same class had been heavily damaged, and that two French destroyers and a seaplane-carrier, *Commandant Teste*, was also sunk or burned.

"While this melancholy action was being fought, either the battle-cruiser *Strasbourg* or the *Dunkerque*, one or the other, managed to slip out of harbour in a gallant effort to reach Toulon or a North African port and place herself under German control, in accordance with the Armistice terms of the Bordeaux Government—though all this her crew and captain may not have realized. She was pursued by aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm and hit by at least one torpedo. She may have been joined by other French vessels from Algiers, which were well placed to do so and to reach Toulon before we could overtake them. She will, at any rate, be out of action for many months to come.

"I need hardly say that the French ships were fought, albeit in this unnatural cause, with the characteristic courage of the French Navy, and every allowance must be made for Admiral Gensoul and his officers who felt themselves obliged to obey the orders they received from their Government and could not look behind that Government to see the German dictation. I fear the loss of life among the French and in the harbour must have been heavy, as we were compelled to use a severe measure of force and several immense explosions were heard.

"None of the British ships taking part in the action was in any way affected in gun power or mobility by the heavy fire directed upon them. I have not yet received any reports of our casualties, but Admiral Somerville's fleet is, in all military respects, intact and ready for further action. The Italian Navy, for whose reception we had also made arrangements and which is, of course, considerably stronger numerically than the fleet we used at Oran, kept prudently out of the way. However, we trust that their turn will come during the operations which we shall pursue to secure the effectual command of the Mediterranean.

"A large proportion of the French Fleet has, therefore, passed into our hands or has been put out of action or otherwise withheld from Germany by yesterday's events. The House will not expect me to say anything about other French ships which are at large except that it is our inflexible resolve to do everything that is possible in order to prevent them falling into the German grip. I leave the judgment of our action, with confidence, to Parliament. I leave it to the nation, and I leave it to the United States. I leave it to the world and history."

To complete this tragic story, it must be recorded that on 9 July, the First Lord (A. V. Alexander) announced that successful action had been taken to deal with the 35,000-ton battleship *Richelieu*, the most modern and formidable in the world, lying at Dakar. With great daring a ship's boat penetrated the harbour defences and dropped depth charges, damaging her propeller and steering gear. Thereafter torpedo-carrying aircraft completed the task of her immobilization.

With these events the Battle of France was brought to a conclusion. The Battle of Britain was about to begin. The Prime Minister drew up a message of personal exhortation which was sent to all persons serving in positions of importance under the Crown. It makes a fitting postscript to this chapter. He wrote :

"On what may be the eve of an attempted invasion or battle for our native land, the Prime Minister desires to impress upon all persons holding responsible positions in the Government, in the fighting services, or in the Civil Departments, their duty to maintain a spirit of alert and confident energy. While every precaution must be taken that time and means afford, there are no grounds for supposing that more German troops can be landed in this country, either from the air or across the sea, than can be destroyed or captured by the strong forces at present under arms. The Royal Air Force is in excellent order and at the highest strength it has yet attained. The German Navy was never so weak, nor the British Army at home so strong as now. The Prime Minister expects all His Majesty's servants in high places to set an example of steadiness and resolution. They should check and rebuke expressions of loose and ill-digested opinion in their circles, or by their subordinates. They should not hesitate to report, or if necessary remove, any officers or officials who are found to be consciously exercising a disturbing or depressing influence, and whose talk is calculated to spread alarm and despondency. Thus alone will they be worthy of the fighting men who, in the air, on the sea, and on land, have already met the enemy without any sense of being outmatched in martial qualities."

## CHAPTER IV

*Orator of Free Men*

WHEN the services which Winston Churchill has rendered to the nation come to be evaluated, highest place will be found for the incomparable speeches in which he declared Britain's inflexible purpose, gave cause for confidence in the outcome of the struggle, strengthened the waverers, and imparted a new inspiration to the staunch of heart.

There was no propaganda in any way approaching the propaganda of the addresses of this champion of Free Men. He was the very embodiment of the national spirit.

As a speaker his manner was exquisitely adapted to the purposes of the leader of the nation at war. The voice is firm and hard, incapable of the subtler modulations, but not to be excelled for expressing the ideas the words convey—resolution, confidence in the people and their cause, contempt for the enemy. With its harsh metallic tones, it brought out the fullness of his scorn for “that wicked man,” and his accomplice, the Jackal (or guttersnipe) of Italy.

His language is rich, colourful, infinitely varied. Few speakers have had such a command of words, can pour out words in such flow of rhetoric. The thought is elevated, the meaning abundantly clear. No man can excel him in extracting the last essence of drama from a situation. Few can equal him in his irony. His phrases will live for all time—“their finest hour,” “never was so much owed by so many to so few,” “give us the tools and we will finish the job”—there is scarcely a speech in the series that lacks its epigram.

As pieces to be read, many of his speeches are assured of their place in literature as well as history—and of how many of our statesmen could the same be said? Of the men of his own time who served as Prime Minister none have combined such a felicity of phrase with so dramatic an interest. Balfour, for all his dialectical skill, is not read for his speeches. Campbell-Bannerman may be remembered for “methods of barbarism” but for no more. Asquith, for all his vaunted style and stately diction, is scarcely readable except for the student of politics. Bonar Law and Neville Chamberlain did not aspire to the same rank of orator. Ramsay MacDonald was diffuse and dull. Lloyd George made many speeches of scintillating raillery, and his perorations won him fame. Stanley Baldwin's somewhat wistful musings of the plain man with a delicate mind were never in Winston's heroic mould.

No speaker has ever obtained so great a hold on so vast an

audience as the Prime Minister during the long conflict. His addresses were as much a contribution to the war effort as the arms and munitions for the fighting forces. These it was that kept the nation in good heart throughout the anxious days of the autumn and winter of 1940.

In August 1940, the stoutest mind might have been excused for feeling some disquiet at the prospects before us. Denmark and Norway had fallen ; Belgium and Holland had been beaten down ; all France was in the enemy's power ; the western coasts of Europe from Cape North to the Pyrenees were in Nazi hands ; even in North Africa the battalions of Mussolini, their weakness as yet unexposed, seemed to menace Egypt.

The Battle of Britain had then begun. Squadron after squadron of the vaunted Luftwaffe were despatched in the vain hope of knocking out the Royal Air Force as a preliminary to the launching of the invasion, much-heralded, but still deferred. While the R.A.F. put the enemy to flight in the skies, men and women on the home front below were labouring to fortify towns and villages. To this nation in arms the Prime Minister on 20 August gave an encouraging account of our situation.

"The dangers we face are still enormous," he said, "but so are our advantages and resources. I recount them because the people have a right to know that there are solid grounds for the confidence which we feel, and that we have good reason to believe ourselves capable, as I said in a very dark hour two months ago, of continuing the war, 'if necessary alone, if necessary for years.' I say it also because the fact that the British Empire stands invincible, and that Nazidom is still being resisted, will kindle again the spark of hope in the breasts of hundreds of millions of down-trodden or despairing men and women throughout Europe, and far beyond its bounds, and that from these sparks there will presently come a cleansing and devouring flame.

"The great air battle which has been in progress over this island for the last few weeks has recently attained a high intensity. It is too soon to attempt to assign limits either to its scale or to its duration. We must certainly expect that greater efforts will be made by the enemy than any he has so far put forth. It is quite plain that Herr Hitler could not admit defeat in his air attack on Great Britain without sustaining most serious injury.

"If, after all his boastings and blood-curdling threats and lurid accounts trumpeted round the world of the damage he has inflicted, of the vast numbers of our Air Force he has shot down, so he says, with so little loss to himself : if after tales of the panic-stricken British crouched in their holes, cursing the plutocratic Parliament which has led them to such a plight ; if after all this his whole air

onslaught were forced after a while tamely to peter out, the Fuehrer's reputation for veracity of statement might be seriously impugned. We may be sure, therefore, that he will continue as long as he has the strength to do so, and as long as any preoccupations he may have in respect of the Russian Air Force allow him to do so.

"On the other hand, the conditions and course of the fighting have so far been favourable to us. I told the House two months ago that whereas in France our fighter aircraft were wont to inflict a loss of two or three to one upon the Germans, and in the fighting at Dunkirk, which was a kind of no man's land, a loss of about three or four to one, we expected that in an attack on this island we should achieve a larger ratio. This has certainly come true.

"A vast and admirable system of salvage, directed by the Ministry of Aircraft Production, ensures the speediest return to the fighting line of damaged machines, and the most provident and speedy use of all the spare parts and material. At the same time the splendid, nay, astounding increase in the output and repair of British aircraft and engines which Lord Beaverbrook has achieved by a genius of organization and drive, which looks like magic, has given us overflowing reserves of every type of aircraft, and an ever-mounting stream of production both in quantity and quality. The enemy is, of course, far more numerous than we are. But our new production already, as I am advised, largely exceeds his, and the American production is only just beginning to flow in.

"The gratitude of every home in our island, in our Empire, and indeed throughout the world, except in the abodes of the guilty, goes out to the British airmen who, undaunted by odds, unwearied in their constant challenge and mortal danger, are turning the tide of world war by their prowess and by their devotion. Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few. All hearts go out to the fighter pilots, whose brilliant actions we see with our own eyes day after day, but we must never forget that all the time, night after night, month after month, our bomber squadrons travel far into Germany, find their targets in the darkness by the highest navigational skill, aim their attacks, often under the heaviest fire, often with serious loss, with deliberate, careful discrimination, and inflict shattering blows upon the whole of the technical and war-making structure of the Nazi power.

"I have no hesitation in saying that this process of bombing the military industries and communications of Germany and the air bases and storage depots from which we are attacked, which process will continue upon an ever-increasing scale until the end of the war, and may in another year attain dimensions hitherto undreamed of, affords one at least of the most certain, if not the shortest of all the roads to victory. Even if the Nazi legions stood triumphant on the Black Sea, or indeed upon the Caspian, even if Hitler was

at the gates of India, it would profit him nothing if at the same time the entire economic and scientific apparatus of German war power lay shattered and pulverized at home."

An important step in the development of our relations with the United States was announced by Winston on this occasion—the decision of the British Government to grant the United States naval and air facilities in British possessions.

"Undoubtedly," he commented, "this process means that these two great organizations of the English-speaking democracies, the British Empire and the United States, will have to be somewhat mixed up together in some of their affairs for mutual and general advantage. For my own part, looking out upon the future, I do not view the process with any misgivings. I could not stop it if I wished; no one can stop it. Like the Mississippi, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll. Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant, to broader lands and better days."

A few days later came the announcement that in return for these facilities, the United States would transfer fifty American destroyers to Britain.

In mid-September the nightly bombings of London and other cities had begun, adding to the diversities as well as the perils of life. At the same time the German preparations for invasion were reported to be progressing in the ports of Holland, Belgium and Northern France. Broadcasting to the nation on 11 September, the Prime Minister said :

"We must regard the next week or so as a very important period in our history. It ranks with the days when the Spanish Armada was approaching the Channel, and Drake was finishing his game of bowls; or when Nelson stood between us and Napoleon's Grand Army at Boulogne. We have read all about this in the history books; but what is happening now is on a far greater scale and of far more consequence to the life and future of the world and its civilization than these brave old days of the past. Every man and woman will therefore prepare himself to do his duty, whatever it may be, with special pride and care.

"Our fleets and flotillas are very powerful and numerous; our Air Force is at the highest strength it has ever reached and it is conscious of its proved superiority, not indeed in numbers, but in men and machines. Our shores are well fortified and strongly manned, and behind them, ready to attack the invaders, we have a far larger and better equipped mobile Army than we have ever had before.

"Besides this, we have more than a million and a half men of the Home Guard, who are just as much soldiers of the regular

Army as the Grenadier Guards, and who are determined to fight for every inch of the ground in every village and in every street. It is with devout but sure confidence that I say : Let God defend the right.

"These cruel, wanton, indiscriminate bombings of London are, of course, a part of Hitler's invasion plans. He hopes, by killing large numbers of civilians, and women and children, that he will terrorize and cow the people of this mighty imperial city, and make them a burden and an anxiety to the Government and thus distract our attention unduly from the ferocious onslaught he is preparing. Little does he know the spirit of the British nation, or the tough fibre of the Londoners, whose forbears played a leading part in the establishment of Parliamentary institutions and who have been bred to value freedom far above their lives.

"This wicked man, the repository and embodiment of many forms of soul-destroying hatred, this monstrous product of former wrongs and shame, has now resolved to try to break our famous island race by a process of indiscriminate slaughter and destruction. What he has done is to kindle a fire in British hearts, here and all over the world, which will glow long after all traces of the conflagration he has caused in London have been removed. He has lighted a fire which will burn with a steady and consuming flame until the last vestiges of Nazi tyranny have been burnt out of Europe, and until the Old World—and the New—can join hands to rebuild the temples of man's freedom and man's honour, upon foundations which will not soon or easily be overthrown.

"This is a time for everyone to stand together, and hold firm, as they are doing. I express my admiration for the exemplary manner in which all the Air Raid Precautions services of London are being discharged, especially the fire brigade, whose work has been so heavy and also dangerous. All the world that is still free marvels at the composure and fortitude with which the citizens of London are facing and surmounting the great ordeal to which they are subjected, the end of which or the severity of which cannot yet be foreseen.

"It is a message of good cheer to our fighting forces on the seas, in the air, and to our waiting armies in all their posts and stations, that we send them from this capital city. They know that they have behind them a people who will not flinch or weary of the struggle—hard and protracted though it will be ; but that we shall rather draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival, and of a victory won not only for ourselves but for all ; a victory won not only for our own time, but for the long and better days that are to come."

In October Winston succeeded to the leadership of the Con-

servative Party on the resignation of Neville Chamberlain. Neville, his health failing after a serious operation, had had to surrender his post as member of the War Cabinet. Winston, in accepting his resignation, expressed his admiration of Neville's "unshaken nerve and persevering will," adding : "The help you have given me since you ceased to be my chief tided us through what may well prove to be the turning point of the war. You did all you could for peace ; you did all you could for victory."

On 9 October, Winston, on the motion of Lord Halifax, was elected leader of the Party. In May, on becoming Prime Minister, he had found good reasons for not accepting the leadership. Now that Neville Chamberlain could no longer lead, he found reasons as cogent for taking the post. Conceding there were considerations for and against he gave his decision for his acceptance. "Considering," he said, "that I have to be in daily relation on matters of much domestic consequence with the leaders of the other two parties who are serving in the Government, I felt that it would be more convenient that I should be able to speak for the Conservative Party with direct and first-hand knowledge of the general position which they occupy upon fundamental issues and also to speak with their authority."

Balancing the negative of May with the affirmative of October it may be concluded that Winston's original decision not to accept had been inspired by his consideration for Neville Chamberlain. He would not wound the man he had succeeded as Prime Minister by superseding him in the Party.

There was a further question which Winston had to consider and resolve upon : "Am I by temperament and conviction able sincerely to identify myself with the main historical conceptions of Toryism and can I do justice to them and give expression to them spontaneously in speech and action ?" Had not the urgencies of war been so pressing, there would have been a wider appreciation of the full political flavour of the great Liberal ex-Minister, posing this question to himself. That he should have done so in the full limelight of the platform was typically Winston. His reasoned answer to his own question gives his own explanation of the manner by which he found it possible in the course of his career to serve with such distinction two political creeds, Liberal and Tory.

"My life," he said, "such as it has been, has been lived for forty years in the public eye, and very varying opinions are entertained about it—and about particular phases in it. I shall attempt no justification, but this I will venture most humbly to submit and also to declare, because it springs most deeply from the convictions of my heart, that at all times according to my lights and throughout the changing scenes through which we are all hurried, I have always faithfully

served two public causes which I think stand supreme—the maintenance of the enduring greatness of Britain and her Empire, and the historical continuity of our island life.

"Alone among the nations of the world we have found the means to combine Empire and liberty. Alone among the peoples we have reconciled democracy and tradition ; for long generations, nay, over several centuries, no mortal clash of religious or political gulf has opened in our midst. Alone we have found the way to carry forward the glories of the past through all the storms, domestic and foreign, that have surged about, and thus to bring the labours of our forbears as a splendid inheritance for modern, progressive democracy to enjoy.

"It is this interplay and interweaving of past and present which in this fearful ordeal has revealed to a wondering world the unconquerable strength of a united nation. It is that which has been the source of our strength. In that achievement, all living parties, Conservative, Liberal, Labour, and other parties like the Whigs who have passed away—all have borne a part and all to-day at the moment of our sorest need share the benefits which have resulted from it.

"This is no time for partisanship or vaunting party claims, but this I will say—the Conservative Party will not allow any party to excel it in the sacrifice of party interests and party feelings which must be made by all if we are to emerge safely and victoriously from the perils which compass us about. In no other way can we save our lives and, what is far more precious than life, the grand human causes which we, in our generation, have the supreme honour to defend. It is because I feel that these deep conceptions lying far beneath the superficial current of party politics and the baffling of accidental events have always been mine, that I accept solemnly, but also buoyantly, the trust and duty you wish now to confide in me."

In December, Winston rose in the House to render his last tribute to his predecessor in office. Neville Chamberlain had not long survived his retirement. He had declined all honours, but one signal mark of honour was paid him. Winston sought and obtained royal permission to have him supplied with Cabinet papers and documents of State so that to within a few days of his death on 9 November he was able to follow the course of affairs.

Winston, in his moving speech, remarked that no man was obliged to alter the opinions which he had formed or expressed on issues that had become a matter of history—but at the lychgate we must all pass our own conduct and judgments under a searching review.

"It fell to Neville Chamberlain," he went on, "in one of the

supreme crises of the world, to be contradicted by events, to be disappointed in his hopes and to be deceived and cheated by a wicked man. Those hopes, those wishes, that faith that was abused were surely among the most notable and benevolent instincts of the human heart—the love of peace, the toil for peace, the strife for peace, and the pursuit of peace even at great peril and certainly to the utter disdain of popularity or clamour."

Neville Chamberlain would not have wished his posterity to pronounce otherwise.

As the orator of democracy and champion of free men, Winston on 21 October made a direct appeal to the French nation over the heads of its defeatist leaders. Having reminded Frenchmen that he had marched with France in peace and war for more than thirty years, he went on :

"Here, in London, which Herr Hitler says he will reduce to ashes . . . our people are holding out unflinchingly. Our Air Force has more than held its own. We are waiting for the long-promised invasion. So are the fishes. But, of course, this for us is only the beginning. Now in 1940 we have . . . the command of the sea. In 1941 we shall have the command of the air. Remember what this means. Herr Hitler with his *chars d'assaut* and other mechanical weapons, and also by Fifth Column intrigue with traitors, has managed to subjugate for the time being most of the finest races in Europe, and his little Italian accomplice is trotting along, hopefully and hungrily, but rather wearily and very timidly, at his side. They both wish to carve up France and her Empire. . . . Not only the French Empire will be devoured by these two ugly customers. Alsace-Lorraine will go once again under the German yoke, and Nice, Savoy and Corsica—Napoleonic Corsica—will be torn from the fair realm of France. But Herr Hitler is not thinking only of stealing other people's territories or flinging goblets of them to his little dog . . . he is plotting and working to quench for ever the fountain of characteristic French culture and French inspiration to the world. . . . It is not defeat that France will be made to suffer at German hands but the doom of complete obliteration. . . ."

He called on Frenchmen to rearm their spirits before it was too late and to remember that the story was not yet finished. Let them have hope and faith. Britain asked of the French that :

". . . if you cannot help us at least you will not hinder us. Presently you will be able to weight the arm that strikes for you. . . . Do not imagine, as the German controlled wireless tells you, that we English think to take your ships and Colonies. We seek to

beat the life and soul out of Hitler and Hitlerism. That alone, that all the time, that to the end. . . .”

Winston’s broadcast in English was heard clearly enough in France. The French translation was promptly jammed by the Germans or by Laval’s orders, or by both, but the B.B.C. repeated it on five occasions on short and medium wave-lengths so that it had a wide audience throughout France and in the French Empire.

Amidst the cares of war, Winston found time to send a memorandum to the heads of the Civil Service departments urging the need for simpler language in official papers and the cutting out of jargon. It was a salutary challenge to the masters of circumlocution from a master of particularly plain speech. Brevity and simplicity should, he urged, take the place of officialese jargon ; paragraphs should be short and crisp. “Let us not,” he pleaded, “shrink from the short expressive phrase ; even if it is conversational.” It was a minor revolution in Whitehall.

He was also responsible for some constitutional experiments. One was the despatch of Cabinet Ministers on service abroad while still retaining ministerial status—Lord Halifax as Ambassador to Washington, Oliver Lyttelton as Minister of State to the Middle East, and Duff Cooper as Chancellor of the Duchy who was sent out to the Far East. An Act of Parliament was necessary to enable Members of Parliament to retain their seats while holding certain posts to which Winston appointed them. This Bill, which authorized the Prime Minister to issue a certificate whereby members escape disqualification by reason of holding office of profit under the Crown, arose from the particular case of Malcolm MacDonald, appointed High Commissioner in Canada. There was a measure of opposition and the Prime Minister defended the Bill in a closely reasoned speech (February 27th, 1941) in which he surveyed the law and custom of the Constitution.

“It was necessary,” he said, “that the Government should be able to select the best available men for the posts to be filled. I am anxious to fill vacancies in High Commissionerships by men of outstanding political reputation, with long experience in the House of Commons and Cabinet Government. I may be biassed in favour of the House of Commons, but I do not hesitate to say that five or ten years’ experience as a member of this House, is as fine an all-round education in public affairs as any man can obtain. It is the policy of the Government to raise and sustain the personal status of Members of Parliament in every possible manner.”

Small wonder that the House found the Prime Minister’s arguments irresistible.

## CHAPTER V

*Libya and Greece*

THE biography of Winston Churchill becomes lost in the wider history of Britain at War. Over the immensity of the national effort the impact of his all-pervading personality may be detected. Of the particular contributions he made to the direction of affairs, what decisions he inspired, what courses he counselled and what rejected, these matters are still but little known though victory has been won and until the war's secrets are fully revealed, the biography of Winston Churchill cannot be completed. The contemporary chronicler can record only the surface things, the bare skeleton of biography to which in some later day the details will be added. Winston himself has supplied the material for this scaffolding work in his own commentaries on the march of events made in the House of Commons or to a larger audience reached through the microphone. At each crisis of the war he reviewed events—either to relate a magnificent tale of success for our arms or, in time of reverses, to maintain the national spirits in a speech radiating confidence in the turn of every phase. It would be difficult to determine which is the greater inspiration for his words, so aptly does he fulfil the injunction :

*If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same.*

It is a tale compounded of disaster and triumph that made up the record of events from Libya to Russia that can be followed as we leap from battlefield to battlefield in the sequence of these speeches.

Italy occupies first place in the narrative. After stabbing France in the back, Mussolini ordered the attack on Greece, where his legions were driven back until the Germans came to his aid. Later in the autumn, the Imperial Forces in Egypt having been reinforced, General Wavell was able to take the offensive in Northern Africa. The results of the opening offensive, the capture of thousands of Italians at the cost of a thousand casualties to ourselves, were announced in a statement the Prime Minister made to the House on 19 December.

"One cannot say," he said, "that the Italians have shown a high fighting spirit or quality in this battle. In other periods of Italian history we know that they have shown great courage, and I am certainly not going to frame a charge against a people with whom

up to this time—God knows we never sought it—we have had no quarrel.

"But perhaps their hearts are not in their work. Perhaps they have so long been disciplined and ruled and so much relieved of all share in the government of their own country that they have not felt those virile emotions which are the foundations for actions of brave armies and which are best nourished by discipline imposed on freedom.

"At any rate, we have seen the spectacle of a whole Italian division laying down its arms in front of a far inferior force, and the work of our Air Force, against three, four, or five to one, has been attended with continued success."

Four days later, following the precedent of his appeal to the French, Winston broadcast over the heads of their rulers to the Italian people, suggesting that the time had come for them as a nation, for the monarchy and the army to take charge of their country's future. It was, he remarked, a strange and terrible thought that the British and Italian nations were at war.

"We have always been friends. We were the champions of the Italian risorgimento. We were the partizans of Garibaldi, the admirers of Mazzini and Cavour. Our fathers and our grandfathers longed to see Italy freed from the Austrian yoke, and to see all minor barriers in Italy swept away.

"How has this war come about? Italians, I will tell you the truth. It is all because of one man. One man, and one man alone, has ranged the Italian people in deadly struggle against the British Empire, and has deprived Italy of the sympathy and intimacy of the United States of America.

"That he is a great man I do not deny, but that, after eighteen years of unbridled power, he has led your country to the horrid verge of ruin can be denied by none.

"It is all one man who, against the Crown and Royal Family of Italy, against the Pope and all the authority of the Vatican and of the Roman Catholic Church, against the wishes of the Italian people, who had no lust for this war, has arrayed the trustees and inheritors of ancient Rome upon the side of the ferocious pagan barbarians.

"There lies the tragedy of Italian history and there stands the criminal who has wrought the deed of folly and of shame."

Where was the need for Italy to intervene in the war, to strike at prostrate France, to attack and invade Greece?

"I ask why—but you may ask why, too, because you never were consulted. The Army was never consulted. No one was consulted. One man and one man alone ordered Italian soldiers to ravage their neighbour's vineyard.

"Surely the time has come when the Italian monarchy and people, who guard the sacred centre of Christendom, should have a word to say upon these awe-inspiring issues. Surely the Italian army, which has fought so bravely on many occasions in the past, but now evidently has no heart for the job, should take some care of the life and future of Italy ?

"I can only tell you that I, Churchill, have done my best to prevent this war between Italy and the British Empire."

To prove his words, the Prime Minister read the message he personally sent to Mussolini at the height of the Battle of France on 16 May. It ran :

"Now that I have taken up my office as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence I look back to our meetings in Rome and feel a desire to speak words of good will to you as chief of the Italian nation across what seems to be a swiftly widening gulf.

"Is it too late to stop a river of blood from flowing between the British and Italian peoples ? We can no doubt inflict grievous injuries upon one another and maul each other cruelly, and darken the Mediterranean with our strife.

"If you so decree it must be so ; but I declare that I have never been the enemy of Italian greatness nor ever at heart the foe of the Italian lawgiver.

"It is idle to predict the course of the great battles now raging in Europe, but I am sure that whatever may happen on the Continent England will go on to the end even quite alone, as we have done before, and I believe with some assurance that we shall be aided in increasing measure by the United States and, indeed, by all the Americas.

"I beg you to believe that it is in no spirit of weakness or of fear that I make this solemn appeal which will remain on record. Down the ages above all other calls comes the cry that the joint heirs of Latin and Christian civilization must not be ranged against one another in mortal strife. Hearken to it, I beseech you in all honour and respect, before the dread signal is given. It will never be given by us."

To this appeal Mussolini sent, two days later, a "dusty answer" :

"I reply to the message which you have sent me in order to tell you that you are certainly aware of grave reasons of a historical and contingent character which have ranged our two countries in opposite camps. Without going back very far in time, I remind you of the initiative taken in 1935 by your Government to organize at Geneva sanctions against Italy engaged in securing for herself a

small place in the African sun without causing the slightest injury to your interests and territories or those of others.

"I remind you also of the real and actual state of servitude in which Italy finds herself in her own sea. If it was to honour your signature that your Government declared war on Germany you will understand that the same sense of honour and of respect for engagements assumed in the Italian-German treaty guides Italian policy to-day and to-morrow in the face of any event whatsoever."

That answer, commented Winston, spoke for itself. One man and one man only was resolved to plunge Italy after all these years of strain and effort into the whirlpool of war.

By February the conquest of Libya had been completed and the Prime Minister had a magnificent tale of victory to unfold in a Sunday night broadcast (9 February). An Italian army had been destroyed and an Italian province captured. A few hours before the broadcast the Navy had poured 300 tons of shells into the port of Genoa from which a German force had been preparing to sail to North Africa.

"Abroad in October," Winston said, "a wonderful thing happened. One of the two dictators, the crafty, cold-blooded, black-hearted Italian, who had sought to gain an Empire on the cheap by stabbing fallen France in the back, got into trouble.

"Without the slightest provocation, spurred on by lust of power and brutish greed, Mussolini attacked and invaded Greece, only to be hurled back ignominiously by the heroic Greek Army, who have revived before our eyes the glories that from the classic age gilded their native land.

"While Mussolini was writhing and smarting under the Greek lash in Albania, Generals Wavell and Wilson, who were charged with the defence of Egypt and the Suez Canal in accordance with our treaty obligations, whose task at one time seemed so difficult, had received very powerful reinforcements of men, cannon, equipment, and, above all, tanks, which we had sent from our island in spite of the invasion threat.

"Large numbers of troops from India, Australia and New Zealand had also reached them.

"Forthwith began that series of victories in Libya which have broken irretrievably the Italian military power in African.

"We have all been entertained and I trust edified by the exposure and humiliation of another of what Byron called

*Those pagod things of sabre sway  
With fronts of brass and feet of clay.*

"When the brilliant decisive victory at Sidi Barrani with its tens

of thousands of prisoners proved that we had quality, manœuvring power and weapons superior to the enemy, who had boasted so much of his virility and military virtues, it was evident that all the other Italian forces in Eastern Libya were in great danger.

"They could not easily beat a retreat along the coastal road without running the risk of being caught in the open by our armoured divisions and brigades ranging far out into the desert in tremendous swoops and scoops. They had to expose themselves to being attacked piecemeal.

"General Wavell, nay, all our leaders and all their live, active, ardent men, British, Australian, Indian, in the Imperial Army saw their opportunity. At that time I ventured to draw General Wavell's attention to the seventh chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew, at the seventh verse, where, as you all know, or ought to know, it is written, 'Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.'

"The Army of the Nile has asked and it was given. They sought and they have found. They knocked and it has been opened unto them.

"In barely eight weeks, by a campaign which will long be studied as a model of military art, an advance of over 400 miles has been made. The whole Italian army in the East, an army which was reputed to exceed 150,000 men, has been captured or destroyed.

"The entire province of Cyrenaica, nearly as big as England and Wales, has been conquered. The unhappy Arab tribes who have suffered for thirty years from the cruelty of the Italian rule—harried in some cases to the point of methodical extermination—these Bedouin survivors have at last seen their oppressors in disorderly flight or led off in endless droves as prisoners of war.

"Egypt and the Suez Canal are safe, and the port, the base and the air fields of Benghazi constitute a strategic point of high consequence to the whole of the war in the Eastern Mediterranean."

The Libyan campaign would not have been possible if the British Mediterranean Fleet, under Admiral Cunningham, had not chased the Italian Navy into its harbours and sustained every forward surge of the Army with all the flexible resources of sea power.

"How far-reaching these resources are we may see from what happened at dawn this morning, when our Western Mediterranean Fleet, under Admiral Somerville, entered the Gulf of Genoa and bombarded in a shattering manner the naval base from which a German Nazi expedition might soon have sailed to attack General Weygand in Algeria or Tunisia.

"It is right that the Italian people should be made to feel the sorry plight into which they have been dragged by Mussolini. If the cannonade of Genoa, rolling along the coast, reverberating in the

mountains, has reached the ears of our French comrades in their grief and misery, it may cheer them with a feeling that friends, active friends, are near, and that Britannia rules the waves."

A few hundred miles to the East, other Imperial forces were beginning the campaign which was to cost the Italians the remainder of their African empire and which was to restore the Emperor of Abyssinia to the throne of his ancestors.

"Here," commented Winston, "we see the beginning of a process of reparation and of the chastisement of wrong-doing which reminds us that though the mills of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding small."

With the spring and the opening of the campaigning season in Europe, German pressure in the Balkans was intensified. From Rumania, the Nazis penetrated into Bulgaria. Next the Rulers of Jugoslavia were summoned to the presence of Hitler and agreed to capitulate. But the Jugoslav people threw out the weak conciliators and prepared at the eleventh hour to receive the force of the gangster's blow. It was not long delayed.

Jugoslavia and Greece were invaded. The Imperial Forces under General Wavell's command had to provide an Expeditionary Force to be transported across the Aegean so that succour could be given to Greece. Profiting by the dispersal and weakening of forces, the Nazis, who had shipped some mechanized divisions across the Sicilian Channel to North Africa, launched an offensive in Libya. The Imperial troops had to fall back and hostile armies were again menacing the Egyptian frontier.

Before a packed and tense House of Commons the Prime Minister on 10 April gave a review of this situation. First he dealt with the further losses sustained by the Italians—the fall of Keren, Asmara and Massawa; the capture of Harar, and Addis Ababa. At sea, Italian naval power had been decisively broken at the Battle of Matapan. Then the Balkans—it had never been our interest or policy to see the war carried into the Balkan peninsula.

"At the end of February we sent the Foreign Secretary and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to the Middle East in order to see whether anything could be done to form a united defensive front in the Balkans. They went to Athens. They went to Ankara. They would have gone to Belgrade, but they were refused permission by the Government of Prince Paul.

"Of course if these three threatened States had stood together they could have had at their disposal sixty or seventy divisions, which, if a good combined plan had been made and if prompt united action had been taken in good time, might have confronted the Germans with a project of resistance which might well have deterred them altogether and must in any case have long delayed

them having regard to the mountainous and broken character of the country to be defended and the limits of the communications available in the various countries through which the German armies forced or intrigued their way.

"On the first occasion when the Foreign Secretary and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff met the Greek King and Prime Minister, the Prime Minister declared spontaneously on behalf of his Government that Greece would resolve at all costs to defend her freedom and native soil against any aggressor—and that even if they were left wholly unsupported by Great Britain or by their neighbours, Turkey and Jugoslavia, they would nevertheless remain faithful to their alliance with Great Britain, which came into play at the opening of the Italian invasion, and would fight to the death against both Italy and Germany.

"This being so, it seemed that our duty was clear. We were bound in honour to give them all the aid in our power. If they were resolved to face the might and fury of the Huns we had no doubts but that we should share their ordeal, and that the soldiers of the British Empire must stand in the line with them.

"We were advised by our generals on the spot, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and General Wavell and General Papagos, the victorious commanders-in-chief, that a sound military plan giving good prospects of success could be made.

"Of course in all these matters there is hazard. In this case, as anyone can see without particularizing unduly, there was for us a double hazard. It remains to be seen how well these opposing risks and duties have been judged. But of this I am sure that there is no less likely way of winning a war than to adhere pedantically to the maxim of 'safety first.'

"Therefore in the first weeks of March we entered into a military agreement with the Greeks, and the considerable movement of British and Imperial troops and supplies which have since developed began to take place.

"If the people of Jugoslavia had made common cause with the Greeks when the Greeks, having been attacked by Italy, had hurled back the invaders, the complete destruction of the Italian armies in Albania could certainly and swiftly have been achieved long before the German forces could have reached the theatre of war, and even in January or February this extraordinary military opportunity was still open.

"But the Government of Prince Paul, untaught by the fate of so many of the smaller countries of Europe, not only observed the strictest neutrality and refused even to enter into effective staff conversations with Greece or with Turkey or with us, but they hugged the delusion that they could preserve their independence by patching up some sort of pact or compromise with Hitler.

"Once again we saw the odious German poison technique employed. In this case, however, it was to the Government rather than to the nation that the doses and the inoculation were administered. The process was not hurried. Why should it have been? All the time the German armies and air force were entering and massing in Bulgaria. From a few handfuls of tourists admiring the beauties of the Bulgarian landscape in the wintry weather—the German forces grew to seven, twelve, twenty, and finally to twenty-five divisions.

"Presently the weak and unfortunate Prince, and afterwards his Ministers, were summoned, like others before them, to Herr Hitler's footstool, and a pact was signed which would have given Germany complete control not only over the body but over the soul of the Slav nation.

"Then at last the people of Jugoslavia saw their peril, and, with a universal spasm of revolt and national resurgence very similar to that which in 1808 convulsed and glorified the people of Spain, they swept from power those who were leading them into a shameful tutelage, and resolved at the eleventh hour to guard their freedom and their honour with their lives.

"All this happened only a fortnight ago. A boa constrictor who had already covered his prey with his foul saliva and then had it suddenly wrested from his coils would be in an amiable mood compared with Hitler, Goering, Ribbentrop and the rest of the Nazi gang when they experienced this bitter disappointment.

"A frightful vengeance was vowed against the Southern Slavs. Rapid, perhaps hurried, redispositions were made of the German forces and of German diplomacy. Hungary was offered large territorial gains to become an accomplice in the assault upon a friendly neighbour with whom she had just signed a solemn pact of friendship and non-aggression. Count Teleki preferred to take his own life rather than join in such a deed of shame.

"A heavy forward movement of German armies already gathered in and dominating Austria was set in motion through Hungary to the northern frontier of Jugoslavia. A ferocious howl of hatred from the supreme miscreant was the signal for the actual invasion.

"The open city of Belgrade was laid in ashes, and at the same time a tremendous drive by the German armoured forces which had been so improvidently allowed to gather in Bulgaria was launched westward into Southern Serbia. And, it no longer being worth while to keep up the farce of love for Greece, other powerful forces rolled forward into Greece, where they were at once unflinchingly encountered and have already sustained more than one bloody repulse at the hands of the heroic Greek Army."

By the end of April the Battle of the Balkans had been won and lost. As Nazi troops were entering Athens, another British evaca-

tion was in progress. In North Africa the advanced German mechanized columns had forced their way Eastward. There were certain murmurings of disappointment at home that the year which had opened so auspiciously with the defeat of the Italians, had brought further reverses for the Allied arms. On the last Sunday of April, the Prime Minister, in a broadcast speech, dispersed any feelings of doubt and misgiving. Nothing that was happening then was comparable in gravity with the dangers through which we had passed.

"I was asked last week," he said, "whether I was aware of some uneasiness which, it was said, existed in the country on account of the gravity, as it was described, of the war situation. So I thought it would be a good thing to go and see for myself what this uneasiness amounted to. And I went to some of our great cities and seaports which had been most heavily bombed, to some of the places where the poorest people have got it worst.

"I have come back not only reassured, but refreshed. To leave the offices in Whitehall, with their ceaseless hum of activity and stress and to go out to the front, by which I mean the streets and wharves of London, or Liverpool, Manchester, Cardiff, Swansea or Bristol, is like going out of a hot-house on to the bridge of a fighting ship. It is a tonic which I should recommend any who are suffering from fretfulness to take in strong doses when they have need of it.

"I feel comforted by an exaltation of spirit in the people which seemed to lift mankind above the level of material facts into the joyous serenity we think belongs to a better world than this.

"Of their kindness to me I cannot speak, because I have never sought it or dreamed of it and can never deserve it.

"I can only assure you that I and my colleagues, or comrades rather, for that is what they are, will toil with every scrap of our life and strength, according to the lot granted to us, never to fail these people or be wholly unworthy of their faithful and generous regard.

"The British nation is stirred and moved as it never has been at any time in its long, eventful and famous history, and it is no hackneyed figure of speech to say that they mean to conquer or die.

"What a triumph the life of these battered cities is over the worst which fire and bombs can do ! What a vindication of the civilized and decent way of living we have been trying to work for and work towards in our island !

"This, indeed, is the great heroic period of our history and the light of glory shines on all. You may imagine how deeply I feel my own responsibility to all these people, my responsibility to bear my part of bringing them safely out of this long, stern, scowling valley through which we are marching and not to demand from them their sacrifices and exertions in vain."

As to the decision to give aid to the Greeks, the Prime Minister

said that we were bound in honour to answer their appeal to the utmost limit of our strength.

"We put the case," he went on, "to the Dominions of Australia and New Zealand, and their Governments, without in any way ignoring the hazards, told us that they felt the same as we did.

"So an important portion of the mobile part of the Army of the Nile was sent to Greece in fulfilment of our pledge. It happened that the divisions available and best suited to the task were from New Zealand and Australia, and that only about half the troops which took part in this dangerous episode came from the Mother Country.

"I see that German propaganda is trying to make bad blood between us and Australia by making out that we have used them to do what we would not have asked of the British Army. I shall leave it to Australia to deal with that taunt.

"Grave disasters have occurred in the Balkans. Jugoslavia has been beaten down. Only in the mountains can she continue her resistance. The Greeks have been overwhelmed, the victorious Albanian army has been cut off and forced to surrender. It has been left to the Anzacs and their British comrades to fight their way to the sea, leaving their mark on all who hinder them.

"I turn aside from the stony path we have to tread to indulge in in a moment of lighter relief. I dare say you have read in the newspapers that by a special proclamation the Italian dictator has congratulated the Italian Army on the glorious laurels they had gained by their victory over the Greeks.

"Here surely is the world's record in the domain of the ridiculous and the contemptible. This whipped jackal Mussolini, who to save his own skin has made of Italy a vassal state of Hitler's empire, is frisking up by the side of the German tiger, with yelps not only of appetite—that could be understood—but even of triumph.

"Different things strike different people in different ways, but I am sure there are a great many millions in the British Empire or the United States who will find a new object in life in making sure that when we come to the final reckoning, this absurd impostor will be abandoned to public justice and universal scorn."

The war taxed the full resources of Winston Churchill the War Minister; during the first phase of his Premiership his skill as Parliamentarian was not called forth to the same degree. He then, for the most part, addressed a House ready to execute his will. Only occasionally was there any considerable manifestation of criticism. The country bore the reverses of 1940 with stoicism, but the cheap successes over the Italians produced a feeling of elation that, psychologically, was an unfortunate precursor to the reverses in the Balkans.

There was an undercurrent of uneasiness amongst the people

which was reflected when the House in May held a two days' debate on the situation after the withdrawal from Greece. Criticism took two forms—on the one hand it was represented that we had not afforded the Greeks enough aid, on the other that we had given too much and had thus weakened the forces available to withstand the German push along the North African coast.

Winston reviewed the situation in a vigorous, fighting speech, and he secured a Parliamentary triumph. Reading his speech you will feel that he enjoyed himself as he dealt with his critics.

In the second day's debate (7 May) Lloyd George had drawn upon his experiences in the last war to offer advice in the conduct of this. Winston complained that it was not the kind of speech one would have expected from the great war leader who in former days was accustomed to brush aside despondency and alarm. It was the kind of speech with which the venerable Marshal Pétain might well have enlightened the closing days of M. Reynaud's Cabinet.

"Mr. Lloyd George," he went on, "has also spoken of the great importance of being surrounded by people who will stand up to me and say 'No, no, no.' He has no idea how strong is the negative principle in the constitution and working of the British war-making machinery.

"The difficulty is not to have more brakes put on the wheel, but to get more impetus and force behind it. We are asked to emulate the German vigour, and next moment the Prime Minister is to be surrounded by 'No-men' who are to resist at every point anything in the nature of speedy, rapid, and above all positive, constructive decisions."

There was a lively brush between the Prime Minister and Hore-Belisha, who was Secretary for War sixteen months previously, and who had alluded to the lessons on tank warfare to be derived from the Battle of France.

"I would not refer to this matter," Winston said, "if he had not endeavoured to give the House an idea of his superior efficiency, when I must say he sometimes stands in need of some humility with regard to the past."

At this remark, Mr. Hore-Belisha sprang to his feet, interrupted, and said : "I do not know what the right hon. gentleman is doing in indulging in these heavy recriminations. It is quite unworthy of the——"

Hore-Belisha's subsequent words were lost in cries of reproach from members.

Winston, who had taken his seat, was then seen to rise, and from various parts of the House there were shouts of "Order." There was a considerable tumult of voices, but Hore-Belisha remained on his feet and continued to speak.

"I make no reproach whatever against the Government for any

lack of plans," he said. "I suggest, and I think the House agreed with me, that the same priority that has been given to aircraft should now be given to tanks, because the Germans achieved their victory in Libya without air superiority."

The remarks were lost in renewed shouts and cries of "Order!" from members on all sides of the House. Hore-Belisha was still on his feet, however, and was heard to say: "And the reproach when one has been out of office for sixteen months—." There were renewed cries of "Speech!" The Prime Minister then rose and resumed.

"For Mr. Hore-Belisha's comfort," he continued, "let me tell him we are making every month now as many heavy tanks as there existed in the British Army at the time he left the War Office, and that we shall very soon—before the end of this year—be producing nearly double that, and this takes no account of the immense production of the United States.

"I only say this by way of reassuring him that the good work he did and the foundations he laid have not been left where he left them. He must learn to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

The Prime Minister rebuked those who talked as if we could afford to lose our position in the Middle East and still carry on. We were determined, he declared, to fight for it with all the resources of the British Empire, and, we had every reason to believe, we should do so successfully.

After a division, in which the Government was voted the confidence of the House by 447 to 3, the Prime Minister walked the length of the Chamber down a lane of cheering members.

When the Churchill administration was formed, it was given a vote of confidence by 381 to none. That the second confidence motion secured an even higher majority was the measure of Winston's success.

On 27 May, the Prime Minister made an announcement to the House on what he termed an episode of an arresting character in the Northern waters of the Atlantic Ocean—the sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck* after a five days' chase extending over 1750 miles.

"On Wednesday of last week, 21 May," the Premier said, "the new German battleship the *Bismarck*, accompanied by the new 8-inch-gun cruiser the *Prinz Eugen*, was discovered by our air reconnaissance at Bergen, and on Thursday, May 22, it was known that they had left.

"Many arrangements were made to intercept them should they attempt, as it seemed probable, to break out into the Atlantic Ocean with a view to striking at our convoys from the United States. During the night of 23 to 24 May our cruisers got into visual contact

with them as they were passing through the Denmark Strait, between Iceland and Greenland. At dawn on Saturday morning the *Prince of Wales* and the *Hood* intercepted the two enemy vessels.

"I have no detailed account of the action, because events have been moving so rapidly, but the *Hood* was struck at about 23,000 yards by a shell which penetrated into one of her magazines, and blew up, with only very few survivors. This splendid vessel, designed twenty-three years ago, is a serious loss to the Royal Navy and even more so the men and officers who manned her.

"During the whole of Saturday our ships remained in touch with the *Bismarck* and her consort, and arrangements were made for effective battle at dawn yesterday morning, but during the night the weather deteriorated, the visibility decreased, and the *Bismarck*, by making a sharp turn, shook off the pursuit. I do not know what has happened to the *Prinz Eugen*, but measures are being taken in respect of her.

"Yesterday, shortly before midday, a Catalina aircraft—one of the considerable number of these very far-ranging scouting aeroplanes which have been sent to us by the United States—picked up the *Bismarck*, and it was seen that she was apparently making for the French ports—Brest or Saint Nazaire.

"On this, further rapid dispositions were made by the Admiralty and by the Commander-in-Chief and, of course, I may say that the moment she was known to be at sea the whole apparatus of our ocean control came into play, very far-reaching combinations began to work. Last evening—from yesterday afternoon—I have not had time to prepare a detailed statement—Fleet Air Arm torpedo-carrying planes from the *Ark Royal* made a succession of attacks upon the *Bismarck*, which now appeared to be alone and without her consort.

"About midnight we learned that the *Bismarck* had been struck by two torpedoes, one amidships and the other astern. This second torpedo apparently affected the steering of the ship, for not only was she reduced to a very slow speed, but continued making uncontrollable circles in the sea. In addition, she was attacked by one of our flotillas and hit by two more torpedoes, which brought her virtually to a standstill, far from help and far outside the range at which the enemy bomber aircraft from the French coast could have come upon the scene.

"This morning, at daylight or shortly after daylight, the *Bismarck* was attacked by the British pursuing battleships. I do not know what were the results of the bombardment; it appears, however, that the *Bismarck* was not sunk by gunfire, and she will now be dispatched by torpedo. It is thought that this is now proceeding, and it is also thought that there cannot be any lengthy delay in disposing of this vessel.

"Great as is our loss in the *Hood*, the *Bismarck* must be regarded

as the most powerful enemy battleship, as she is the newest enemy battleship, and the striking of her from the German Navy is a very definite simplification of the task of maintaining the effective mastery of the Northern seas and the maintenance of the Northern blockade. Although there is shade as well as light in this picture, I feel that we have every reason to be satisfied with the outcome of this fierce and memorable naval encounter."

Even before the statement to the House had been concluded, the *Bismarck* had been sent by torpedo to her grave in the Atlantic.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Crete and Russia*

WHEN the evacuation of Crete followed close upon the withdrawal from Greece there was a renewed murmur of anxiety. In Crete, at least, we had imagined, we were meeting the foe on terms which were not so adverse as to make success impossible. The arm-chair critics in the clubs provided articles for the Press that made plain charges of lethargy against the Administration. In the prevailing mood of disheartenment the critics found ready readers. When Crete was debated on 10 June, the Prime Minister had to face a House that was not hostile, but anxious. He delivered another of his appreciations of the strategical situation that carried conviction to his hearers by the logic of the argument he unfolded.

The Prime Minister began his review of events by recalling the reports that had appeared in the papers of "grave uneasiness" and "growing unrest." A debate that arose in this way was bound to assume the appearance of a challenge to the Administration. These debates raised an important question of principle.

"I think it would be a mistake if the House got into the habit of calling for an explanation in this dangerous and widespread struggle and of asking for an account to be given of why any action was lost or any part of the front was beaten in.

"There is always the danger that a Minister in my position may, in seeking to vindicate the course we have pursued, inadvertently say something which may supply the enemy with some essential and seeming innocent-looking factor about which the enemy is in doubt, and thus enable the enemy to construct a comprehensive and accurate picture of our state of mind and the way we are looking at things.

"The heads of the dictator Governments are not under similar pressure to sustain or excuse any ill-success that may befall them. Far be it from me to compare myself, or the office I hold, or the functions I discharge, with those pretentious and formidable potentates. I am only the servant of the Crown and of Parliament, and I am always at the disposal of the House of Commons, where I have lived my life.

"Still, the House, and I think I may say the country, have placed very considerable responsibilities upon me, and I am sure they would not wish any servant they have entrusted with such duties to be at a disadvantage against our antagonists.

"I had not heard, for instance, that Herr Hitler had to attend the Reichstag and say why he sent the *Bismarck* on her disastrous cruise without waiting a few weeks for her to be accompanied by the *Tirpitz*, another 45,000-ton ship, and engage in a whole sea battle. I have not heard any announcement that Signor Mussolini has made a statement on the reasons why the greater part of his African empire and 200,000 of his soldiers are in our hands.

"I feel I should be at a needless disadvantage if it were understood that I should be obliged in public debate to give an account of our operations whether the time was suitable or not. It would, for instance, have been a nuisance if Parliament had demanded a debate on the loss of the *Hood* before we had been in a position to explain the measures we had taken to secure the destruction of the *Bismarck*.

"I always take the greatest pains to keep the House fully informed of the position, and I think it would be better if I were permitted, on behalf of the Government, to choose the occasions for making statements about the war which I am anxious to do."

Next Winston placed the incident of Crete in its perspective against the general background of the war and he effectively answered the criticism that no more anti-aircraft guns had been dispatched.

"The fighting in Crete," he said, "is only one part of the very important and complicated campaign which is being fought in the Middle East, and it can only be viewed as one part. The vast scene can only be surveyed as a whole, and it ought not to be exposed to a debate piecemeal, especially at a time when operations which are all related to one another are still incomplete.

"In the general survey of the war come all sorts of considerations about the gain and loss of time and its effect upon the future. There also comes into the picture the disproportion of our available resources to meet the many calls made upon them.

"Why, first of all, were there not enough guns provided for the two serviceable airfields which existed in Crete? To answer that question one would have to consider how many guns we had and

whether we could afford to spare them for that purpose, and that leads us to a wider sphere.

"All this time the Battle of the Atlantic has been going on. A very great number of guns which might have been usefully employed in Crete have been, and are being, mounted in the merchant vessels to beat off the attack of the Focke-Wulf and Heinkel aircraft, whose depredations have been notably lessened thereby.

"Again we must consider whether our airfields at home or our air factories or the ports and cities in our island, which are under heavy and dangerous attack, should have been further denuded or stinted of guns in the last six or seven months for the sake of the war in the Middle East.

"It must be remembered that everything we send out to the Middle East is out of action for the best part of three months, as it has to go round the Cape.

"We have run very great risks and faced very serious maulings in this island to sustain the war in the Mediterranean, and no one, I venture to submit, can be a judge of whether we should have run more risks or exposed ourselves to heavier punishment at home for the sake of fortifying and multiplying the Cretan airfields without having full and intimate knowledge of all our resources and making a complete survey of the various claims upon them.

"This I should like to say. A man must be a perfect fool who thinks that we have large quantities of anti-aircraft guns and aircraft lying about unused at the present time."

The Prime Minister then addressed himself to the critics who represented that we should only offer opposition to the enemy where we could, before the event, feel confident that success would be ours.

"I see there are those who say that you should never fight without superior or at least ample air support, and they ask, 'When will this lesson be learned ?'

"But supposing you cannot have it ? The questions that have to be settled are not questions between what is good and what is bad. They are very often the choice between two very terrible alternatives. If you cannot have this essential, this desirable air support, must you then yield one important key position after another ?

"There are others also who have said you should defend no place you cannot be sure you can hold. One would have to ask : Can you ever be sure how a battle will develop before it has been fought ?

"If this principle of giving up without a fight any place you cannot be sure of holding were adopted, would not the enemy be able to make a vast number of valuable conquests without making a fight at all ? And where would you make a stand and engage with resolution ? The further question would arise : What would

happen if you allowed the enemy to advance unopposed and to overrun without cost the most invaluable and strategic points?

"Suppose we had never gone to Greece, and suppose we had never attempted to defend Crete. Where would the Germans be now? Suppose we had simply resigned territory and strategic islands to them without a fight, might they not at this early stage of the campaign of 1941 already be masters of Syria and Irak and preparing themselves for an advance into Persia?

"The Germans in this war have gained many victories very easily. They have overrun great countries and beaten down strong Powers with very little resistance being offered to them. It is not only a question of the time that is gained by fighting strongly even at a disadvantage for an important point, but there is also this vitally important principle of stubborn resistance to the will of the enemy.

"I merely throw out these considerations to the House in order that they may see that there are some arguments at least which deserve to be considered before you can adopt a rule that if you have not got a certainty of winning at any point it is better to clear out beforehand.

"The whole history of war shows the fatal absurdity of such a doctrine. Again and again it has been proved that stubborn resistance, even against heavy odds, and even under exceptionally unfavourable conditions, is an essential element in victory.

"I wonder what would have been said by critics if we had given up the island without firing a shot. It would have been said that we had surrendered the key to the Eastern Mediterranean. Crete was an important salient in our line of defence. This battle can only be judged in relation to the campaign as a whole. I have been asked a lot of questions about the Battle of Crete.

"I could answer all these questions, but do not propose to do so here. It is impossible to fight battles in detail, beforehand, or afterwards, from Whitehall or the House of Commons. His Majesty's Government, in their responsibility to Parliament, choose the best generals they can find and set before them the strategic objectives of the campaign. They then support them to the best of their power with men and munitions.

"It is impossible to go into tactical details. It is only when great strategic issues of policy arise that it is convenient for us to try here to form final opinions. If defeat is bitter there is no use in trying to explain defeat. People don't like defeat or its explanation. There is only one answer to defeat, and that is victory.

"If a Government in time of war gives the impression that it cannot in the long run reach victory, then who cares for its explanation? It ought to go; that is if you are sure you can get another to do better.

"It must be remembered that no Government can conduct war unless it stands on a solid foundation, and is known to do so. Unless there is a strong impression of solidarity in war, that Government cannot give the support necessary to the fighting men and their commanders in difficult periods. If the Government has always to be looking over its shoulders to see if it is about to be stabbed in the back it would be of no use. It could not keep an eye on the enemy.

"There is another point of some difficulty which presents itself to me whenever I am asked to make a statement to the House. Ought I to encourage good hopes of the successful outcome of particular operations or ought I to prepare the public for bitter disappointments ?

"From the purely British standpoint the second of these courses is to be preferred, and this is the course I usually follow. It is a course which would no doubt commend itself to Earl Winterton, who has been urging us to look on the gloomy side of things—a sort of inverted Couéism.

"You get up in the morning and you say : 'We can lose the war in the next four months.' You say it with emphasis and go upon your daily task invigorated.

"But you have to cater for so many different countries. Statements of a pessimistic character, which are calculated to discourage our friends and spread alarm and disappointment over wide regions, affect nicely balanced neutrals and encourage the enemy, who, of course, seizes upon any gloomy statement and repeats it a myriad-fold in his propaganda throughout the world.

"It might well be asked why, having begun the battle for Crete, did you not persist in the defence of the island ? If you could bring off 17,000 men safely to return to Egypt why not reinforce the 17,000 to carry on the battle ?

"The moment it was proved that we could not crush the air-borne landing before the Fleet losses became too heavy to hold off longer a sea-borne landing, Crete was lost, and it was necessary to save what was possible out of the Army.

"It is one thing to take off 17,000 men with side-arms, and quite another to land them in fighting condition with guns and vehicles. I think it is a wonderful thing that as many as 17,000 got away from that island in face of the enemy's overwhelming command of the air.

"I do not consider we should regret the Battle of Crete. The fighting there attained a severity and fierceness the Germans had not previously encountered in their walk through Europe. In killed, wounded, missing and prisoners we have lost about 15,000 men. This takes no account of the losses of the Greeks and Cretans, who fought with the utmost bravery, and suffered also heavily.

"On the other hand, from the most careful and precise inquiries I have made, and which have been made by the commanders-in-chief on the spot, we believe that about 5,000 Germans were drowned in trying to cross the sea and at least 12,000 were killed or wounded on the island itself. In addition, the air force the Germans employed sustained extraordinary losses, about 180 fighter and bomber aircraft being destroyed and at least 250 troop-carrying aeroplanes. And this, at a time when our air strength is overtaking the enemy, is important.

"I am sure it will be found that this sombre, ferocious battle which was lost, and lost, I think, upon no great margin, was a battle well worth fighting and that it will play an extremely important part in the whole defence of the Nile Valley throughout the present year. I do not think there are any who are responsible for it who would not take the same decisions again, although no doubt, like our critics, we should be wiser in many ways after the event."

I have thought it fit to give extended extracts from this speech on Crete because it seems to me a masterly example of the skill of the parliamentarian in presenting a logical argument in reply to criticism. Point by point the critics' case was stated and point by point the reply was given in a piece of reasoning that yields the reader a feeling of intellectual pleasure.

As the year advanced Winston had the satisfaction of seeing the soundness of his argument attested by strategical developments. By successive measures the Allied forces forestalled the enemy and obtained control of affairs in Irak, in Syria, and in Iran that was once called Persia. Had the Nazis not been forced to batter so many of their troop-carrying units to destruction in Crete, it might not have been possible for the Allies to have taken such effective steps to make safe the Middle East.

At midsummer the war situation was transformed when Hitler launched his armies along a 1,800-mile front against the Russians in that wanton and perfidious attack. On the evening of the last Sunday in June, the Prime Minister came to the microphone to announce to the world the decision that henceforth Britain and Russia were allies in arms. It was an historic speech and the element of personal drama was not lacking. Twenty years before Winston had been prominently concerned in the struggles which had marked the advent of the Bolsheviks to power. In the intervening years he had consistently denounced the Bolshevik system. Would he and his Government be prepared to sink political differences with the Soviet? Or would they regard the latest act of German aggression as being in a different class from those that had gone before? It was a question to which Hitler did not predict the right answer.

The Prime Minister's reply was unhesitating and emphatic.

Immediate steps were taken to complete a formal alliance with the Russian Government and in that Sunday evening broadcast (22 June) he gave an immediate pledge to send full aid. He said : \*

"At four o'clock this morning Hitler attacked and invaded Russia. All his usual formalities of perfidy were observed with scrupulous technique.

"A non-aggression treaty had been solemnly signed and was in force between the two countries. No complaint had been made by Germany of its non-fulfilment. Under its cloak of false confidence the German armies grew up in immense strength along a line which stretched from the White Sea to the Black Sea, and their air fleets and armoured divisions slowly and methodically took up their stations.

"Then suddenly, without declaration of war, without even an ultimatum, the German bombs rained down from the sky upon the Russian cities, German troops violated the Russian frontiers, and an hour later the German Ambassador, who during the night before was lavishing his assurances of friendship—almost of alliance—upon the Russians, called upon the Russian Foreign Minister to tell him that a state of war existed between Germany and Russia.

"Thus was repeated on a far larger scale the same kind of outrage against every form of signed contract and international faith which we have witnessed in Norway, in Denmark, in Holland, in Belgium, and which Hitler's accomplice and jackal Mussolini so faithfully imitated in the case of Greece.

"All this was no surprise to me. In fact I gave clear and precise warning to Stalin of what was coming. I gave him warning as I have given warnings to others before.

"I can only hope that these warnings did not fall unheeded. All that we know at present is that the Russian people are defending their native soil and that their leaders have called upon them to resist to the utmost.

"Hitler is a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder. Not content with having all Europe under his heel or else terrorized into various forms of abject submission, he must now carry his work of butchery and desolation among the vast multitudes of Russia and Asia.

"The terrible military machine which we and the rest of the civilized world so foolishly, so supinely, so insensately allowed the Nazi gangster to build up year by year from almost nothing—this machine cannot stand idle lest it rust or fall to pieces.

"It must be in continual motion, grinding up human lives and trampling down the homes and the rights of hundreds of millions of men. Moreover, it must be fed not only with flesh but with oil.

"So now this bloodthirsty guttersnipe must launch his mechan-

ical armies upon new fields of slaughter, pillage, and devastation. Poor as are the Russian peasants, workmen and soldiers, he must steal from them their daily bread. He must devour their harvests, he must rob them of the oil which drives their ploughs, and thus produce a famine without example in human history.

"And even the carnage and ruin which his victory, should he gain it—and he has not gained it yet—will bring upon the Russian people will itself be only a stepping-stone to an attempt to plunge the four or five hundred million who live in China and the three hundred and fifty millions who live in India into that bottomless pit of human degradation over which the diabolical emblem of the swastika flaunts itself.

"It is not too much to say here, this summer evening, the lives and happiness of a thousand million additional human beings are now menaced with brutal Nazi violence. That is enough to make us hold our breath.

"The Nazi regime is indistinguishable from the worst features of Communism. It excels all forms of human wickedness in the efficiency of its cruelty and ferocious aggression.

"No one has been a more consistent opponent of Communism than I have for the last twenty-five years. I will unsay not a word that I have spoken about it. But all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding. The past, with its crimes, even follies, and its tragedies, flashes away.

"I see the Russian soldiers standing on the threshold of their native land guarding the fields their fathers have tilled from time immemorial. I see them guarding their homes, where mothers and wives pray—ah, yes, for there are times when all pray—for the safety of their loved ones, for the return of the breadwinner, of their champion and their protector.

"I see the 10,000 villages of Russia where the means of existence was wrung so hardly from the soil, but where there are still primordial human joys, where maidens love and children play. I see advancing upon all these in hideous onslaught the Nazi war machine, with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, its crafty expert agents, fresh from the cowing and tying down of a dozen countries. I see also the deadly, drilled, docile brutish masses of the Hun soldiery plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts.

"I see the German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, delighted to find what they believe is an easier and safer prey. And behind all this glare, behind all this storm, I see that small group of villainous men who planned, organized and launched that cataract of horrors upon mankind.

"Now I have to declare the decision of the Government, and I feel sure it is a decision in which the great Dominions will, in due course, concur. But we must speak out now at once, without

a day's delay. I have to make the declaration. But can you doubt what our policy will be?

"We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us, nothing.

"We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang. We shall fight him by land, we shall fight him by sea, we shall fight him in the air until, with God's help, we have rid the earth of his shadow and liberated its peoples from his yoke.

"Any man or State who fights against Nazidom will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe.

"That is our policy and that is our declaration. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and to the Russian people. We shall appeal to all our friends and allies in every part of the world to take the same course and pursue it, as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end.

"We have offered to the Government of Soviet Russia any technical or economic assistance which is in our power and which is likely to be of service to it. We shall bomb Germany by day as well as by night in ever-increasing measure, casting upon them month by month a heavier discharge of bombs and making the German people taste and gulp each month a sharper dose of the miseries they have showered on mankind.

"Hitler's invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles. He hopes, no doubt, that all this may be accomplished before the winter comes and that he can overwhelm Great Britain before the fleets and air power of the United States may intervene.

"He hopes that he may once again repeat upon a greater scale than ever before that process of destroying his enemies one by one by which he has so long thrived and prospered, and that then the scene will be clear for the final act without which all his conquests would be in vain, namely, the subjugation of the Western Hemisphere to his will and to his system.

"The Russian danger is therefore our danger and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe. Let us learn the lessons already taught by such cruel experience, let us redouble our exertions and strike with united strength while life and power remain."

## CHAPTER VII

*The Atlantic Charter*

MONTHS before the outrage of Pearl Harbour brought America into the war, President Roosevelt, like Winston Churchill, had dedicated himself to the same high purpose of vanquishing the aggressors. Their aim was the same, but the means they must pursue to that end was very different.

The English Prime Minister had a united nation at his back, eager to do his bidding, ready for any sacrifice that might be called for. To lead them was a simple task for a man who personified their courage, their staunchness, their tenacity. Inspired by the people he gave the people new inspiration.

Far different was the situation of the American President. No united nation at his back was eager to follow his call to service. When war began, the people of the United States, sympathetic though they were to the Allied Cause, felt themselves aloof from the quarrels of the Old World. There was a widespread feeling that their country must not again be involved in Europe's wars, so that the sons and fathers of the Republic should again be sent across the Atlantic to European battlefields. There was a slogan that epitomized American feeling : "We did not raise our sons to fight in Europe."

President Roosevelt was conscious, as his people for the most part were not conscious, of the menace that Hitler and the Nazis constituted to the United States, conscious that the distance of the Atlantic gave no effective security from Nazi designs.

In the intervening two years we in this country watched the President as he gave a display of the persuasive arts of the political master as he led his people little by little to a consciousness of their peril, induced them to advance to meet it step by step. It required statesmanship of the very highest order. We in this country watched with admiration this achievement in leadership, and reckoned the world fortunate that to the West of the Atlantic no less than on the East, there was a man of keen vision, high skill and tenacity of purpose. It was fortunate, too, that the leaders of the free peoples in the Old World and the New found it possible to co-operate so harmoniously against the common foe.

The meeting between President and Prime Minister aboard ship in the Atlantic in the month of August 1941 was immediately recognized as one of the turning points in history. It was a meeting that caught the imagination of the world—an inspiration to the free peoples, a solemn warning to the aggressors. As the Prime Minister

said on his return, it symbolized the marshalling of the good forces of the world against the forces of evil.

The meeting signalized the change which had come over American opinion under the guidance of the President since the day when Winston took office as Prime Minister. The staunchness of the Prime Minister contributed no little to the transformation of American opinion—and the change that had taken place was a veritable transformation. Before the Battle of France, opinion in the United States, where the memory of Munich still lingered, was very lukewarm for Britain. The Deliverance of Dunkirk, which first showed the toughness of the British soldier, marked the kindling of warmer feelings. The resolution with which Prime Minister and people accepted the fall of France sent opinion up a point or two more in our favour. The action against the French Fleet at Oran produced an even more favourable impression. At home in England we were almost ashamed that we were driven to such drastic action against our former Ally. In the United States the news was received almost with delight as a sign of the vigour and decisiveness of British leadership. British grit and endurance under the air raids of the autumn completed the conversion of America. By the time Mr. Roosevelt had been elected for a third term as President the American people were ready to respond to the more incisive leadership which his re-election made possible.

The death of the Marquess of Lothian, Ambassador to Washington, on 12 December, presented the Prime Minister with the problem of selecting a fit person as successor. It was not merely the most important diplomatic post—it was one of the most important posts in the world. An unfortunate choice might check the tide flowing in our favour, and than that nothing could be more damaging to the war effort. After weighing the claims of the possible candidates, the Prime Minister decided to despatch his Foreign Secretary, Viscount Halifax, to fill the post. It was an appointment without precedent. Never before had a Minister stepped out of the Foreign Office to act as Ambassador, and never before was a man serving his country abroad permitted to retain his Ministerial status.

Winston, in a speech to the Pilgrims (9 January) said that it was necessary to send to Washington the "best man we could find without regard to any other consideration whatsoever" to discharge "the most important of all functions outside this country which can be discharged by a British subject."

Paying tribute to the American President, Winston said : "I hail it as a most fortunate occurrence that at this awe-striking climax in world affairs, there should stand at the head of the American republic a famous statesman long versed and experienced in the work of government and administration, in whose heart there burns

the fire of resistance to aggression and oppression, and whose sympathies and nature make him the sincere and undoubted champion of justice and of freedom and of the victims of wrong-doing wherever they may dwell."

An unofficial envoy arrived in Britain not long afterwards from the United States in the person of Wendell Willkie, Republican opponent of Mr. Roosevelt in the Presidential election. He came with a letter of introduction to the Prime Minister from the President who in his own handwriting wrote one verse from the poet Longfellow with the observation that "it applies to your people as it does to us." The verse was :

*Sail on, O ship of state !  
Sail on, O Union, strong and great !  
Humanity with all its fears,  
With all the hopes of future years,  
Is hanging breathless on thy fate !*

Winston read the verse in his broadcast of 9 February, when he sent an answer back to the President :

"Put your confidence in us. Give us your faith and your blessing and under Providence all will be well. We shall not fail or falter. We shall not weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock of battle nor the long trials of vigilance and exertion will wear us down. Give us the tools and we will finish the job."

In two historic declarations the President set before the people of the United States the gravity of the peril facing them and the need for stringent action. The first was his Fireside Chat (20 December) beginning : "Never before since Jamestown and Plymouth Rock has our American civilization been in such danger as now." He called upon the people for mightier efforts so that they could become the "great arsenal of democracy." In his address to Congress (6 January) he outlined his scheme for lending arms and munitions of war to Britain and the Allies. The text of the Lease-Lend Bill followed four days later.

Winston voiced the thanks of the Allied Governments to the President in a statement in the Commons on 13 March after the Lease-Lend Act had been passed. "I am sure," he said, "the House would wish me to express on their behalf and on behalf of the nation our deep and respectful appreciation of this monument of deep and far-seeing statesmanship. The most powerful democracy have in effect declared in a solemn statute that they will devote their overwhelming industrial and financial strength to ensuring the defeat of Nazism in order that nations great and small may live in tolerance, security and freedom. By doing so the Government and

people of the United States have written a new Magna Carta. I offer to the United States our gratitude for her inspiring act of faith."

Further developments in the rendering of assistance followed, to which the Prime Minister referred in his broadcast of 27 April when dealing with the Battle of the Atlantic.

"It was," he said, "with indescribable relief that I learned of the tremendous decisions lately taken by the President and people of the United States. The American Fleet and flying-boats have been ordered to patrol the wide waters of the Western Hemisphere and to warn the peaceful shipping of all nations outside the combat zone of the presence of lurking U-boats or raiding cruisers belonging to the two aggressor nations.

"We British will therefore be able to concentrate our protecting forces far more on the routes nearer home and to take a far heavier toll of the U-boats there. I have felt for some time that something like this was bound to happen.

"The President and Congress of the United States, having newly fortified themselves by talking with their electors, have solemnly pledged their aid to Britain in this war because they deem our cause just and because they know their own interests and safety would be endangered if we were destroyed.

"They are taxing themselves heavily, they have passed great legislation, they have turned a large part of their gigantic industry to making the munitions which we need, they have even given us or lent us valuable weapons of their own.

"I could not believe that they would allow the high purposes to which they have set themselves to be frustrated and the products of their skill and labour sunk to the bottom of the sea."

A return offering of poetry was made by Winston on this occasion for the verses from Longfellow that the President had sent him. "Last time I spoke to you I quoted the lines of Longfellow which President Roosevelt had written out to me in his own hand. I have some other lines which are well known, and which seem appropriate to our fortunes to-night, and I believe they will be so judged wherever the English language is spoken and the flag of freedom flies." He then read from Clough's "Say not the struggle nought availeth," the lines—

*For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,  
Seem here no painful inch to gain,  
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,  
Comes silent, flooding in, the main,  
And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light,  
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright.*

In the month of June President and Prime Minister were honoured with the bestowal of University Degrees from the other side of the Atlantic. A unique ceremony took place at Harvard on June 19 when a nominee Convocation of Oxford University was held there to confer on Mr. Roosevelt the degree of Doctor of Civil Law. The ceremony conformed as closely as possible with Oxford tradition.

The Chancellor of the University was there in the person of the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, who was accompanied by six beadles. Proctors, too, were present.

A week later (June 26) Winston received the degree of Doctor of Laws of Rochester University, the presentation being made in a ceremony conducted across the Atlantic by Radio telephony. Rochester, as Professor Valentine recalled, when presenting the degree, was the birthplace of Winston's mother. So, when Professor Valentine declared : "Winston Churchill, America admires you," the people of the United States could feel that their admiration was directed to a son, or at least a half-brother, of America.

It was the sense of kinship which touched Winston most about the ceremony. "As I speak from Downing Street to Rochester University," he said, "and through you to the people of the United States, I almost feel I have the right to do so because my mother, as you have stated, was born in your State, and here my grandfather, Leonard Jerome, lived for very many years conducting as a prominent and rising citizen the newspaper with the excellent eighteenth-century title of 'The Plain Dealer'."

"The great Burke has truly said : 'People will not look forward to posterity who never look backwards to their ancestors,' and I feel it most agreeable to recall to you that the Jeromes were rooted for many generations in American soil and fought in Washington's armies for the independence of the American colonies and the foundation of the United States.

"I expect I was on both sides then. And I must say I feel on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean now.

"At intervals during the last forty years I have addressed scores of great American audiences in almost every part of the Union.

"I have learnt to admire the courtesy of these audiences ; their love of free speech, their fair play ; their sovereign sense of humour, never minding the joke that is turned against themselves ; their earnest, voracious desire to come to the root of the matter and to be well and truly informed on Old World affairs.

"And now in this time of world storm, when I have been called upon by King and Parliament, and with the support of all parties in the State and the goodwill of the people to bear the chief responsibility in Great Britain, and when I have had the supreme honour of speaking for the British nation in its most deadly danger

and in its finest hour, it has given me comfort and inspiration to feel that I think as you do, that our hands are joined across the oceans, and that our pulses throb and beat as one.

"Indeed, I will make so bold as to say that here at least, in my mother's birth city of Rochester, I hold a latch-key to American hearts."

"One of the most important things that has happened since the war began," was the description the Prime Minister applied to the occupation of Iceland by the United States which he announced to the House of Commons on 9 July. "This," he stated, "has been undertaken by the United States in pursuance of the purely American policy of protecting the Western Hemisphere from the Nazi menace. I understand it is the view of the American technical authorities that the modern conditions of war, especially air war, require forestalling action, in this case especially in order to prevent the acquisition by Hitler of jumping-off grounds from which it would be possible, bound by bound, to come to close quarters with the American continent.

"This measure of American policy is in complete harmony with British interests, and we have found no reason on any occasion for objecting to it. We still propose to retain our army in Iceland, and as British and United States forces will both have the same object in view—namely, the defence of Iceland—it seems very likely they will co-operate closely and effectively in resistance of any attempt by Hitler to gain a footing. It would be obviously foolish for the United States to have one plan for defending Iceland and for the British forces to have another.

"Looked at from every point of view, I have been unable to find any reason for regretting the step which the United States has taken, which in the circumstances it has been forced to take; indeed, I think I may almost go so far as to say, on behalf of the House of Commons, as well as of His Majesty's Government, that we really welcome it. Whether similar satisfaction will be aroused in Germany is another question, and one which hardly concerns us to-day.

"The second principle of United States policy which, I understand, led to the occupation of Iceland has been the declared will and purpose of the President, Congress, and the people of the United States not only to send all possible aid in warlike munitions and necessary supplies to Great Britain, but also to make sure we get them. Apart from this, the position of the United States forces in Iceland will, of course, require their being sustained or reinforced by sea from time to time. These consignments of American supplies for American forces on duty oversea for the purposes of the United States will, of course, have to traverse very dangerous waters, and there will be a very large traffic constantly passing through dangerous waters. I dare say it may be found in practice mutually advan-

tageous for the two navies involved to assist each other so far as is convenient in that part of the waters."

There seems to be no consensus of opinion whether the meeting of President and Prime Minister, in August, was the best or the worst kept secret of the war. It has been variously described in both terms. So far as the British Press was concerned the secret was well kept, though it was known in Fleet Street and in circles that are termed well-informed. Winston would have been not ungratified had he been aware of the intensity of the anxiety over his safety on the Atlantic crossing which was felt in the hearts of men who are supposed to be superior to common hopes and fears.

News of the meeting was not allowed to reach the newspaper readers of Britain but in America the reticence was not so complete. There were reports in the United States Press of a mystery surrounding the President's voyage in the yacht *Potomac* and these were coupled with the absence from London of the Prime Minister. American correspondents next established that one by one members of the President's Cabinet were leaving Washington for destinations on the Atlantic seaboard along the route believed to have been taken by the *Potomac*. Mr. Sumner Welles, Under-Secretary of State, Col. Knox, Secretary of the Navy, and Mr. Harriman, "special expediter" of the Lease-Lend Act, as well as General Marshall, Chief of the Army General Staff, General Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Staff, and Admiral Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, were among those whose absence was noted and commented on. There came reports from the *Potomac* recording fishing exploits of Mr. Roosevelt. Usually there was no mention of her whereabouts or destination, though on one occasion it was stated she was off New England.

The secret, well kept or not, as may be, was broken to the world by Mr. Attlee in a broadcast on 15 August. The President and the Prime Minister, he stated, had met at sea. They were accompanied by officials of their two Governments, including high-ranking officers of their military, naval and air services. The problem of the supply of munitions of war, as provided by the Lease-and-Lend Act, was examined.

Lord Beaverbrook, then Minister of Supply, joined in the conferences—and was to proceed to Washington to discuss further details with officials of the United States Government. These conferences were also to cover the supply problems of the Soviet.

The President and Premier drew up an Eight Point declaration, the Charter of the Atlantic, which made known to the world "certain common principles in the policies of the two countries on which they base their hopes for a better future of the world." It was the first enumeration of Britain's war aims (or peace aims) for which the Prime Minister had been frequently pressed, and it was

not the less notable in that it formally associated the United States with the Allies in the essential precursor—the conclusion of victory. The Eight Points declared by President and Prime Minister were :

*First*, their countries seek no aggrandisement, territorial or other.

*Second*, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.

*Third*, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live ; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.

*Fourth*, they will endeavour, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.

*Fifth*, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field, with the object of securing for all improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security.

*Sixth*, after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.

*Seventh*, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.

*Eighth*, they believe all the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

The association of the United States with Britain and her ally, Russia, was further developed in a joint message sent to Stalin by President and Prime Minister. Dealing as it did with the supply of arms to the Soviet it was more closely concerned with the promotion of the war effort than the Atlantic Charter.

"We," ran the message, "have taken the opportunity afforded by consideration of the report of Mr. Harry Hopkins on his return from Moscow to consult together as to how best our two countries can help your country in the splendid defence that you are making against Nazi attack.

"We are at the moment co-operating to provide you with the very maximum supplies that you most urgently need. Already many shiploads have left our shores and more will leave in the immediate future.

"The needs and demands of your and our armed services can only be determined in the light of the full knowledge of the many factors which must be taken into consideration in conjectures that we make. In order that all of us may be in a position to arrive at speedy decisions as to the apportionment of our joint resources, we suggest that we prepare a meeting to be held at Moscow, to which we would send high representatives who could discuss these matters directly with you. If this conference appeals to you, we want you to know that, pending decisions of that conference, we shall continue to send supplies and material as rapidly as possible.

"We must now turn our minds to the consideration of a more long-term policy, since there is still a long and hard path to be traversed before there can be won that complete victory without which our efforts and sacrifices would be wasted. The war goes on upon many fronts, and before it is over there may be yet further fighting on fronts that will be developed.

"Our resources, though immense, are limited, and it must become a question as to where and when those resources can best be used to further to the principal extent our common effort. This applies equally to manufactured war supplies and to raw materials. We realize fully how vitally important to the defeat of Hitlerism is the brave and steadfast resistance of the Soviet Union, and we feel, therefore, that we must not in any circumstances fail to act quickly and immediately in this matter of planning the programme for the future allocation of our joint resources."

The Charter and the message were the formal, bare bones of the meeting. It remained for the Prime Minister to invest them with the warmth of flesh and blood when he broadcast on his return (24 August).

"I thought," he said, "you would like me to tell you something about the voyage I made across the ocean to meet our great friend the President of the United States. Exactly where we met is a secret, but I don't think I shall be indiscreet if I go so far as to say that it was 'somewhere in the Atlantic.'

"In a spacious, land-locked bay which reminded me of the west coast of Scotland, powerful American warships, protected by strong flotillas and far-ranging aircraft, awaited our arrival and, as it were, stretched out a hand to help us in. Our party arrived in the newest, or almost the newest, British battleship, the *Prince of Wales*, with a modest escort of British and Canadian destroyers.

"There for three days I spent my time in company, and I think

I may say in comradeship, with Mr. Roosevelt, while all the time the chiefs of staff and naval and military commanders, both of the British Empire and of the United States, sat together in continual council."

"President Roosevelt is the thrice-chosen head of the most powerful State and community in the world. I am the servant of King and Parliament at present charged with the principal direction of our affairs in these fateful times, and it is my duty also to make sure, as I have made sure, that anything I say or do in the exercise of my office is approved and sustained by the whole British Commonwealth of nations.

"Therefore this meeting was bound to be important because of the enormous forces at present only partially mobilized but steadily mobilizing, which are at the disposal of these two major groupings of the human family, the British Empire and the United States, who, fortunately for the progress of mankind, happen to speak the same language and very largely think the same thoughts, or anyhow think a lot of the same thoughts.

"The meeting was therefore symbolic. That is its prime importance. It symbolized in a form and manner which everyone can understand in every land and in every clime, the deep underlying unities which stir and at decisive moments rule the English-speaking peoples throughout the world. Would it be presumptuous for me to say that it symbolizes something even more majestic, namely, the marshalling of the good forces of the world against the evil forces which are now so formidable and triumphant, and have cast their cruel spell over the whole of Europe and a large part of Asia?

"This was a meeting which marks for ever in the pages of history the taking up by the English-speaking nations amid all this peril, tumult and confusion, of the guidance of the fortunes of the broad, toiling masses in all the continents, and our loyal effort, without any clog of selfish interest, to lead them forward out of the miseries into which they have been plunged back to the broad high-road of freedom and justice. This is the highest honour and the most glorious opportunity which could ever have come to any branch of the human race."

The Prime Minister surveyed the wicked achievements of the forces of evil culminating in the attack on Russia. "We are," he said, "in the presence of a crime without a name." The observation that Europe was not the only Continent devastated by aggression led up to a warning to Japan—"This has got to stop." The United States were labouring to reach a fair settlement with the Japanese. If these hopes should fail then Britain would range herself at the side of the United States.

Coming back to the proceedings aboard ship in that land-locked bay, Winston went on :

"We had the idea when we met there, the President and I, that without attempting to draw final and formal peace aims or war aims, it was necessary to give all peoples, and especially the oppressed and conquered peoples, a simple, rough and ready war-time statement of the goal towards which the British Commonwealth and the United States mean to make their way, and thus make a way for others to march with them upon a road which will certainly be painful and may be long. There are, however, two distinct and marked differences in this joint declaration from the attitude adopted by the Allies during the latter part of the last war and no one should overlook them.

"The United States and Great Britain do not now assume that there will never be any more war again. On the contrary, we intend to take ample precautions to prevent its renewal in any period we can foresee by effectively disarming the guilty nations while remaining suitably protected ourselves.

"The second difference is this : That instead of trying to ruin German trade by all kinds of additional trade barriers and hindrances, as was the mood of 1917, we have definitely adopted the view that it is not in the interests of the world and of our two countries that any large nation should be unprosperous or shut out from the means of making a decent living for itself and its people by its industry and enterprise.

"These are far-reaching changes of principle upon which all countries should ponder.

"The question has been asked : How near is the United States to war ? There is certainly one man who knows the answer to that question. If Hitler has not yet declared war upon the United States, it is surely not out of his love for American institutions ; it is certainly not because he could not find a pretext. He has murdered half a dozen countries for far less.

"Fear, fear of immediately redoubling the tremendous energies now being employed against him is no doubt a restraining influence. But the real reason is, I am sure, to be found in the method to which he has so faithfully adhered, and by which he has gained so much. What is that method ? It is a very simple method. 'One by one,' that is his plan ; that is his guiding rule ; that is the trick by which he has enslaved so large a portion of the world.

"Three and a half years ago I appealed to my fellow-countrymen to take the lead in weaving together a strong defensive union, within the principles of the League of Nations, a union of all countries who left themselves in ever-growing danger ; but none would listen. All stood idle while Germany rearmed. Czechoslovakia was sub-

jugated. A French Government deserted their faithful ally and broke a plighted word in that ally's hour of need.

"Russia was cajoled and deceived into a kind of neutrality or partnership while the French Army was annihilated. The Low Countries and the Scandinavian countries, acting with France and Great Britain in good time, even after the war had begun, might have altered its course, and would have had at any rate a fighting chance.

"The Balkan States had only to stand together to save themselves from the ruin by which they are now engulfed. But one by one they were undermined and overwhelmed. Never was the career of crime made more smooth.

"Why is Hitler striking at Russia and inflicting and suffering himself, or rather making his soldiers suffer, this frightful slaughter? It is with the declared object of turning his whole force upon the British islands. And if he could succeed in beating the life and strength out of us, which is not so easy, then is the moment when he will settle his account, and it is already a long one, with the people of the United States and generally with the Western Hemisphere.

"One by one : there is the process ; there is the simple dismal plan which has served Hitler so well. It needs but one final successful application to make him master of the world. I am devoutly thankful that some eyes at least are fully opened to it while time remains. I rejoiced to find that the President saw in their true light and proportion the extreme dangers by which the American people, as well as the British people, are now beset.

"It was indeed by the mercy of God that he began eight years ago that revival of the strength of the American Navy without which the New World to-day would have to take its orders from the European dictators, but with which the United States still retains the power to marshal her gigantic strength, and in saving herself render an incomparable service to mankind."

"One by one"—it was an argument most effectively dramatized and it was, I think, intended for the ears of listeners in the New World rather than for the already converted audience in the Old. The broadcast was brought to a close with the description of the Church Parade and the singing of the old familiar hymns.

"We had a Church Parade on the Sunday in our Atlantic bay. The President came on the quarter deck of the *Prince of Wales*, where there were mingled together many hundreds of American and British sailors and marines. The sun shone bright and warm while we all sang the old hymns which are our common inheritance, and which we learned as children in our homes.

"We sang the hymn founded on the psalm which John Hampden's soldiers sang when they bore his body to the grave, and in which the brief precarious span of human life is contrasted with the immutability of Him to whom a thousand ages are but as yesterday when it is past and as a watch in the night.

"We sang the sailors' hymn 'For those'—and there are very many—'in peril on the sea.' We sang 'Onward Christian soldiers,' and, indeed, I felt that this was no vain presumption, but that we had the right to feel that we were serving a cause for the sake of which a trumpet has sounded from on high.

"When I looked upon that densely-packed congregation of fighting men of the same language, of the same faith, of the same fundamental laws, of the same ideals, and now to a large extent of the same interests, and certainly in different degrees facing the same danger, it swept across me that here was the only hope, but also the sure hope, of saving the world from measureless degradation. And so we came back across the ocean waves, uplifted in spirit, fortified in resolve."

After the Atlantic Conference there came another great step forward in Mr. Roosevelt's policy, the broadcast announcement of American naval action to guard Lease-Lend supplies on their way across the Atlantic.

*PHASE THE SIXTH*

*The World At War*

*The work he did we ought t'admire  
And were unjust if we should more require. . .  
For who on things remote can fix his sight  
That's always in a triumph or a fight?*

ABRAHAM COWLEY

## CHAPTER I

### *Enter Japan*

THE year 1941 had not run its course before President and Prime Minister were again meeting in conference—not aboard ship in a land-locked bay but in the United States capital, not merely as friends, one of them bound by restraints of a diminishing neutrality but as full allies united in war against the common foe.

The entry of Japan on the side of the Axis added new burdens to our lot and further losses to those we had already suffered. Grievous though these were, we may yet give thanks to Providence and the Japanese. By the outrage of Pearl Harbour, they accomplished in a few hours what Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with all his statesmanship, might never have achieved. The bombs that sank the United States warships brought a united America into the war. It was then that the goodwill established by the British and United States leaders began to pay its richest dividends.

In political affairs in all lands and in all ages, men have found it easier to oppose one another than to co-operate. Promising alliances in the past have been brought to nought by the personal jealousies of chiefs of state.

The peoples of Britain and the United States, in common with the free peoples of the world, have owed much to the good-comradeship that existed between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill. The harmony between them was an inspiration to the men about them, to the leaders of their armed forces, and to their peoples. They fought together as good comrades and, now that overwhelming victory has rewarded their labours, it is for the peoples to ensure that the team spirit of the years of war shall endure in the years of peace.

Now that victory has been won, it is difficult to recall to mind the anxieties that still prevailed in these islands during the last months before America was ridded of the remaining limitations of a vanishing neutrality. President Roosevelt had pledged his country to be the arsenal of democracy, but it was a distant arsenal whose munitions might fall to the predatory U-boats before reaching our eager hands.

In anxious admiration we watched Franklin Roosevelt as, with

delicacy of political touch, he deftly inched American opinion little by little from neutrality to co-belligerency. His technique was inimitable. A broadcast address from President to people would be announced. There would be a spate of advance publicity. Semi-inspired opinion would let it be known that a major step against the Axis was to be expected. Expectation would be worked up to a fine heat. Last ditch isolationists—there were still last ditch isolationists in 1941—would prepare their denunciations. Then would come the Presidential announcement falling far short of predictions. Isolationists would have to fold up their drafts of protest. But when the flurry was over it would be seen that one more step had been taken to give American aid to the forces of freedom. That advance made, the propaganda machine would prepare for the next Presidential chat from the White House fireside.

It was in a broadcast on September 11th that the President told the United States that the time had come to put an end to "soporific lullabies." Henceforth German warships would enter American waters at their peril, and the limit of those defensive waters was given a liberal interpretation. This was Roosevelt's rattlesnake speech. "We have sought," he said, "no shooting war with Hitler, but when you see a rattlesnake poised to strike, you do not wait until he has struck, before you strike him."

The Nazis quaintly made lament at this plain speaking. It was un-neutral, irresponsible, favouring one belligerent and provoking another.

In the House of Commons, a few days later, Winston Churchill acknowledged our growing indebtedness to America. He numbered among the features of the situation that encouraged us as we climbed from the pit of peril, the "majestic momentum of the United States resolve and action."

In October the President announced that by revision of the Neutrality Act, United States ships, which would be specially armed would be permitted to sail direct to British ports to deliver Lend-Lease materials. This was a great step forward and one calculated to terminate neutrality at no distant date, for the Nazis could scarcely stand by and watch supplies of war reaching Britain in American bottoms—and were they to intervene the shooting would have started.

By November the President had been provided with the occasion for announcing that shooting had indeed begun. The United States destroyer *Kearney* had been torpedoed. At the Navy Day Dinner in Washington Roosevelt reiterated that America had wished to avoid hostilities, but the firing had begun and "history has recorded who fired the first shot." The *Kearney* incident would not be taken lying down. The American Navy had been ordered in future to

shoot at sight. The American people had cleared the decks and taken battle stations.

War between the United States and the Axis could not, it appeared, be long delayed. It was not, however, to be the destiny of a U-boat commander to bring America into war for the second time in a quarter of a century.

With their thoughts and energies concentrated upon Hitler's war, the British people had not, for the most part, paid much heed to the activities of the oriental partner in the Axis. From time to time there had been news of the Japanese in French Indo-China. When France collapsed, the Pétain government had welcomed the incursion of the Japanese as a means, so Vichy represented, of preserving the land against the designs of the British and the de Gaullists. It was not long before the Japanese had followed Hitler's example in humiliating the rulers of Vichy. Flouting French sovereignty and repudiating the Protocol by which they had pledged themselves to respect the rights and interests of the Republic in Eastern Asia, the Japanese set about making themselves masters of Indo-China as a preliminary to using it as a base for their further designs.

These events were overshadowed in the public mind by the anxieties of the Eastern front in Europe—the advance of the German war machine into the heart of Russia, the evacuation of Orel, the capture of Odessa, the mounting threat to Moscow. Then, in November, in his Lord Mayor's Day speech, the Prime Minister focused attention on the Far East. The war, he began, which had engulfed Europe and had broken into North-Eastern Africa, might yet involve the greater part of Asia and spread to the remaining portions of the globe. Rather more than a year before, he had announced the despatch of a battle fleet back into the Mediterranean.

"To-day," he said, "I am able to go further." Owing to the effective help received in the Atlantic from the United States, to the sinking of the *Bismarck*, to the completion of splendid new battleships and aircraft-carriers of the largest size, as well as to the cowing of the Italian Navy, he was able to announce that "we now feel ourselves strong enough to provide a powerful force of heavy ships, with its necessary ancillary vessels, for service if needed in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Thus we stretch out the long arm of brotherhood and motherhood to the Australian and New Zealand peoples and to the peoples of India."

Recalling that forty years before he had voted for the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Winston declared that he had always been a well-wisher of the Japanese and that he would view with keen sorrow the opening of a conflict between Japan and the English-speaking world. He went on: "The United States' interests in

the Far East are well known. They are doing their utmost to find ways of preserving peace in the Pacific. We do not know whether their efforts will be successful. But should they fail I take this occasion to say—and it is my duty to say—should the United States become involved in war with Japan, the British declaration will follow within the hour."

Later in November word went round naval circles that the heavy units of the British Navy despatched to the Far East included one of our latest battleships, the *Prince of Wales*. This was borne out when Singapore reported that this ship with the *Repulse* had arrived there. Aboard were Rear-Admiral Sir Tom Phillips, until recently Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff and now C.-in-C. Eastern Fleet.

In Tokio, Japanese newspapers and politicians were adopting a more menacing tone in their references to the Powers which were opposing their so-called "New Order" in the Far East. In Washington negotiations proceeded between Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, and the Japanese envoy, Kurusu.

It was a diplomatic farce. On December 7th Kurusu attended in Washington to deliver his Government's latest note on the American proposals for a settlement in the Far East. An hour before he entered the State Department, Japanese air squadrons had begun bombing the American island of Oahu.

The Japanese scrupulously observed the niceties of Axis technique in launching their attack. Before any declaration of war, and without warning, their naval aircraft from dawn onwards of that "date which will live in infamy" made heavy attacks on Pearl Harbour, the Hawaiian base, and on bases in the Philippines. British territories were simultaneously attacked.

Later followed the declaration of war, made by Hirohito the Emperor in a rescript beginning grandiloquently : "We by the grace of heaven, Emperor of Japan, seated on the throne of a line unbroken for ages, enjoin upon you—our loyal and brave subjects : We hereby declare war on the United States of America and the British Empire."

The Imperial challenge was accepted with alacrity. Shortly after noon on the following day (Monday, December 8th), the British Government authorized an immediate declaration of war upon Japan which was formally communicated in the following letter from the Prime Minister to the Chargé d'Affaires in London :

FOREIGN OFFICE,

*December 8th.*

SIR,

On the evening December 7th His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom learned that Japanese forces, without previous warning, either in the form of a declaration of war or of an ultimatum with a

conditional declaration of war, had attempted a landing on the coast of Malaya and bombed Singapore and Hong Kong.

In view of these wanton acts of unprovoked aggression, committed in flagrant violation of International Law, and particularly of Article I of the Third Hague Convention, relative to the opening of hostilities, to which both Japan and the United Kingdom are parties, His Majesty's Ambassador at Tokyo has been instructed to inform the Imperial Japanese Government, in the name of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, that a state of war exists between the two countries.

I have the honour to be, with high consideration.

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL.

Parliament was not sitting, but a hurriedly summoned House of Commons—convened for the first time in its history by radio—heard a statement from the Prime Minister, who said :

"As soon as I heard, last night, that Japan had attacked the United States, I felt it necessary that Parliament should be immediately summoned. It is indispensable to our system of government that Parliament should play its full part in all the important acts of state and at all the crucial moments of the war; and I am glad to see that so many Members have been able to be in their places, despite the shortness of the notice.

"With the full approval of the nation, and of the Empire, I pledged the word of Great Britain, about a month ago, that should the United States be involved in war with Japan, a British declaration of war would follow within the hour.

"I therefore spoke to President Roosevelt on the Atlantic telephone last night, with a view to arranging the timing of our respective declarations. The President told me that he would this morning send a Message to Congress, which, of course, as is well known, can alone make a declaration of war on behalf of the United States, and I then assured him that we would follow immediately.

"However, it soon appeared that British territory in Malaya had also been the object of Japanese attack, and later on it was announced from Tokyo that the Japanese High Command—a curious form; not the Imperial Japanese Government—had declared that a state of war existed with Great Britain and the United States. That being so, there was no need to wait for the declaration by Congress. American time is very nearly six hours behind ours. The Cabinet, therefore, which met at 12.30 to-day, authorized an immediate declaration of war upon Japan.

"Meanwhile, hostilities had already begun. The Japanese began a landing in British territory in Northern Malaya at about

6 o'clock—1 a.m. local time—yesterday, and they were immediately engaged by our forces, which were in readiness. The Home Office measures against Japanese nationals were set in motion at 10.45 last night. The House will see, therefore, that no time has been lost, and that we are actually ahead of our engagements.

"The Royal Netherlands Government at once marked their solidarity with Great Britain and the United States at 3 o'clock in the morning.

"It is worth while looking for a moment at the manner in which the Japanese have begun their assault upon the English-speaking world. Every circumstance of calculated and characteristic Japanese treachery was employed against the United States. The Japanese envoys, Nomura and Kurusu, were ordered to prolong their mission in the United States, in order to keep the conversations going while a surprise attack was being prepared, to be made before a declaration of war could be delivered. The President's appeal to the Emperor, reminding him of their ancient friendship and of the importance of preserving the peace of the Pacific, has received only this base and brutal reply.

"Now that the issue is joined in the most direct manner, it only remains for the two great democracies to face their task with whatever strength God may give them. We must hold ourselves very fortunate, and I think we may rate our affairs not wholly ill-guided, that we were not attacked alone by Japan in our period of weakness after Dunkirk, or at any time in 1940, before the United States had fully realized the dangers which threatened the whole world and had made much advance in its military preparation.

"So precarious and narrow was the margin upon which we then lived that we did not dare to express the sympathy which we have all along felt for the heroic people of China. We were even forced for a short time, in the summer of 1940, to agree to closing the Burma Road. But later on, at the beginning of this year, as soon as we could regather our strength, we reversed that policy, and the House will remember that both I and the Foreign Secretary have felt able to make increasingly outspoken declarations of friendship for the Chinese people and their great leader, General Chiang Kai-shek.

"When we think of the insane ambition and insatiable appetite which have caused this vast and melancholy extension of the war we can only feel that Hitler's madness has infected the Japanese mind, and that the root of the evil and its branch must be extirpated together. . . . The enemy has attacked with an audacity which may spring from recklessness, but which may also spring from a conviction of strength. When we look around us over the sombre panorama of the world, we have no reason to doubt the justice of our cause or that our strength and will-power will be

sufficient to sustain it. We have at least four-fifths of the population of the globe upon our side.

"We are responsible for their safety and for their future. In the past we have had a light which flickered, in the present we have a light which flames, and in the future there will be a light which shines over all the land and sea."

The same evening Winston broadcast the speech he had made and added a postscript appeal for a special effort from all engaged upon the making of munitions of war. Particularly was this effort essential for the production of aircraft which would be more than ever necessary since the war had spread over so many wide spaces of the earth.

In America a united nation was now behind the President. Pearl Harbour was a naval disaster but it killed isolationism. Even the Hearst press fell into line—"all out to win."

A unanimous Senate endorsed the President's declaration of war. One Representative alone differed from 388 other members of the House—a woman pacifist who had voted in 1917 against war with Germany.

Three days later, the European partners to the Axis regularized the position by open declarations of war on the United States—an overt declaration made, presumably, because no prior act of aggression was possible.

The entire English-speaking world (apart from Eire) was now engaged and as Winston said to the House: "I know I speak for the United States as well as for the British Empire when I say that we would all rather perish than be conquered—and on this basis, putting it at its worst, there are quite a lot of us to be killed."

We should have to suffer considerable punishment in the Far East, was the Prime Minister's warning to the House. On December 10th, he had the melancholy duty of announcing the first of our grievous losses—the sinking by Japanese planes of the two battleships, *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*. "In my whole experience," Winston said, "I do not remember any naval blow so heavy or so painful."

The destruction of these two ships was to have a decisive influence on the immediate course of events in the Far East. Admiral Phillips had gone beyond the range of fighter protection to engage Japanese transports disembarking invaders of Siam and Malaya. The enemy concentrated a large force on the target thus offered to them. The success they scored at the cost of only seven aircraft meant that during the vital period of the Japanese attacks we had no capital ships available with which to intervene and the American Fleet in the Far East had been put out of action at Pearl Harbour.

Winston Churchill's missions abroad to maintain contact with

the Allied leaders were later to become almost a matter of routine. In 1941 we had not accustomed ourselves to his role of peripatetic envoy, and his first official visit to Washington surprised and heartened the English-speaking peoples of two continents.\*

Winston had slipped quietly away from London and for some days his absence from the Westminster scene scarcely aroused comment. By the time it was noted he was well on the way across the Atlantic in H.M.S. *Duke of York*. He completed the final stage of his journey to Washington by air. His arrival was announced two days before Christmas by the President himself. "There is," said Mr. Roosevelt, "one primary objective in our coming conversations—the defeat of Hitlerism throughout the world."

The secret of the journey had been well preserved and the announcement was received with enthusiasm on both sides of the Atlantic. The visit was without precedent. Never before had a British Prime Minister crossed the ocean in time of war to confer with a United States President.

No time was lost in getting down to business. On December 23rd President and Prime Minister sat up until one o'clock in the morning—6 a.m. by the clocks of London that had hitherto regulated Winston's life—discussing problems of world strategy, world supply and world victory. Winston with his personal staff was the guest of the President at the White House, where a special work room had been set apart for him.

The President invited the Prime Minister to take the weekly White House Press Conference. To make himself visible to all the assembled journalists, Winston had to mount a chair, and there he stood delighted and delighting. The pressmen cheered themselves hoarse. He submitted himself to questioning by the correspondents and acquitted himself with an adroitness that impressed his questioners. One correspondent reminded him of his remark about certain "climacteric periods of the war," and asked whether he ranked the entry of the United States as one of these. "I sure do" was the response in American vernacular that the audience appreciated.<sup>1</sup>

Even amidst the preoccupations of Allied affairs, Winston found time to broadcast a Christmas message to the folks at home, speaking from the Christmas Tree ceremony at the White House. "Let the children," he said, "have their night of fun and laughter."

Many problems were solved at the Washington conclaves,

<sup>1</sup> It was noted that in referring to the Russian successes, Winston was reported to have spoken of the Germans as having sustained a "bloody prop" almost unequalled in the history of war. There was much philological speculation about the use of "prop." It was suggested that this might have been a misquotation, but the lexicographers proved otherwise. Australian usage was invoked: in the Commonwealth a horse that checks its gallop suddenly with forelegs pushed stiffly out is said to "prop." The term is also known in the records of pugilism—indeed, boxer Ned, who in 1887 met each rush of his enemy with "straight props," has secured lexicographic immortality.

many decisions taken, but the outstanding success of the Prime Minister's visit was the speech he delivered to both houses of the United States Congress assembled in joint session. The occasion was unprecedented in Congressional history. The speech was worthy of the occasion. The Prime Minister scored a personal triumph and in so doing he strengthened the ties linking the great democracies of the Old World and the New. At their first meeting in that land-locked bay in August, President and Premier had established relations of good fellowship. By his address to Congress Winston extended that good fellowship between their peoples.

Of the leaders of American life the only conspicuous absentee from the Senate Chamber that afternoon was Franklin D. Roosevelt. Winston left the President behind him at the White House when he drove to the Capitol attended by a heavy guard. The Senate room was filled to capacity. Members of Congress had hurried back to Washington from their vacation to be present. Members of the Cabinet were there, judges of the Supreme Court, and diplomatic representatives. The roar of cheering that went up as Winston entered, escorted by Senator Barkley, might have disconcerted a less assured speaker.

Winston began by a happy touch that reminded his listeners of his own American ancestry. He only regretted that his mother, whose memory he cherished across the vale of years, was not there that day. "By the way," he went on, "I cannot help reflecting that if my father had been American and my mother British instead of the other way round, I might have got here on my own. In that case, this would not have been the first time you would have heard my voice. In that case I should not have needed any invitation, but if I had, it is hardly likely that it would have been unanimous—so perhaps things are better as they are."

In a notable passage he made confession of his political faith as a democrat.

"I am," he declared, "a child of the House of Commons. I was brought up in my father's house to believe in democracy. 'Trust the people' was his message. . . . I owe my advancement entirely to the House of Commons, whose servant I am. In my country, as in yours, public men are proud to be servants of the state and would be ashamed to be its masters."

Having spoken of the Olympian fortitude he had found in America, mask of inflexible purpose and proof of well-grounded confidence in the final outcome, Winston warned his hearers of the severity of the ordeal lying ahead. The enemy had the advantages of preparedness; only a portion of American resources was as yet mobilized.

"For the best part of twenty years the youth of Britain and America have been taught that war is evil, which is true, and that

it would never come again, which has been proved false. For the best part of twenty years the youth of Germany, Japan and Italy have been taught that aggressive war is the noblest duty of the citizen. . . . We have performed the duties and tasks of peace. They have plotted and planned for war. This has naturally placed us in Britain and now places you in the United States at a disadvantage."

Time would correct this—but how much time? If in the first flush of their martial enthusiasm the people of America envisaged an early victory, then the Prime Minister administered an unpalatable corrective. It was, he suggested, not an unreasonable hope that in twelve months' time the Allied nations would be quite definitely in a better position and that the year 1943 would enable them to assume the initiative upon an ample scale.

"Some people may be startled or momentarily depressed when, like your President, I speak of a long and hard war. But our peoples would rather know the truth, sombre though it be. And after all, when we are doing the noblest work in the world, not only defending our hearths and homes but the cause of freedom in other lands, the question whether deliverance comes in 1942, 1943, or 1944 falls into its proper place in the grand proportions of human history."

Mighty strokes of war had already been dealt against the enemy. The Russians had inflicted wounds upon the Nazi tyranny and system which had bitten deep. The boastful Mussolini had crumpled already; he was now but a lackey and serf, the merest utensil of his master's will. He had been stripped of his African Empire. Abyssinia had been liberated. Our armies controlled the regions from Teheran to Benghazi, and from Aleppo and Cyprus to the sources of the Nile.

Surveying the position of the Allied Forces, Winston answered in advance criticisms which were to be passed in the weeks ahead, of American as well as British lack of preparedness in the Far East.

"The onslaught upon us," he said, "so long and so secretly planned by Japan has presented both our countries with grievous problems for which we could not be fully prepared. If people ask me—as they have the right to ask me in England—why it is that you have not got ample equipment of modern aircraft and Army weapons of all kinds in Malaya and in the East Indies, I can only point to the victories General Auchinleck has gained in the Libyan campaign. Had we diverted and dispersed our gradually growing resources between Libya and Malaya, we should have been found wanting in both theatres.

"If the United States has been found at a disadvantage at various points in the Pacific Ocean, we know well that it is to no small extent because of the aid you have been giving us in munitions

for the defence of the British Isles and for the Libyan campaign and above all because of your help in the battle of the Atlantic, upon which all depends, and which has in consequence been successfully and prosperously maintained. . . . The choice of how to dispose of our hitherto limited resources had to be made by Britain in time of war and by the United States in time of peace. I believe that history will pronounce that upon the whole—and it is upon the whole that these matters must be judged—the choice made was right."

Japan's decision to plunge into war in a single day against the United States and the British Empire had astonished many people. It certainly appeared to be an irrational act. For many years past the policy of Japan had been dominated by secret societies of subalterns and junior officers of the Army and Navy. It might be that these societies, dazzled and dizzy with their own schemes of aggression and the prospect of early victories, had forced their country against its better judgment into war.

"They have certainly embarked upon a very considerable undertaking, for after the outrages they have committed . . . they must now know that the stakes for which they have decided to play are mortal. When we consider the resources of the United States and the British Empire compared with those of Japan, when we remember those of China, which has so long and valiantly withstood invasion, and when we also observe the Russian menace, it becomes difficult to reconcile Japanese action with prudence or even with sanity."

Here the speaker's voice assumed a tone that will never be forgotten by those privileged to hear him, as he asked his historic question : "What kind of a people do they think we are?" We were a people, did they not realize, who would never cease to persevere, until the Japanese had been taught a lesson they and the world would never forget.

Finally, the Prime Minister touched on the problems of maintaining the world's peace when victory had been won. "Prodigious hammer-strokes have been needed to bring us together again—or, if you will allow me to use other language, I will say that he must indeed have a blind soul who cannot see that some great purpose and design is being worked out here below, of which we have the honour to be the faithful servants. It is not given to us to peer into the mysteries of the future. Still, I avow my hope and faith, sure and inviolate, that in the days to come the British and American peoples will for their own safety and for the good of all walk together, side by side in majesty, in justice and in peace."

From Washington, Winston journeyed to Canada to consult with Mackenzie King. Arriving at Ottawa on December 29th, he took part in the deliberations of the Canadian War Cabinet,

and the following day he addressed the two houses of the Dominion legislature.

He allowed himself much greater freedom of speech than he had used in his address in Washington.

Having paid tribute to what the Canadians had achieved and the contributions they had made to the Empire's cause, he said : "I should like to point out to you that we have not at any time asked for any mitigation in the fury or malice of the enemy. The peoples of the British Empire may love peace. They do not seek the lands or wealth of any country. But they are a tough and hardy lot. We have not journeyed across the centuries, across the oceans, across the mountains, across the prairies, because we are made of sugar-candy.

"Look at the Londoners, the Cockneys, look at what they have stood up to, grim and gay with their cry 'We can take it' and their war-time mood of 'What is good enough for anybody is good enough for us.' We have not asked that the rules of the game should be modified. We shall never descend to the German and Japanese level. But if anybody likes to play rough, we can play rough too. Hitler and his Nazi gang have sown the wind. Let them reap the whirlwind. Neither the length of the struggle nor any form of severity which it may assume shall make us weary or shall make us quit.

"I have been all this week with the President of the United States, that great man whom destiny has marked for this climax of human fortune. We have been concerting the united pacts and resolves of more than thirty states and nations to fight on in unity together and in fidelity one to another, without one thought except the total and final extirpation of the Hitler tyranny, the Japanese frenzy, and the Mussolini flop. . . . The enemies coalesced and combined against us, have asked for total war. Let us make sure they get it."

Canada has a large French-speaking population and close ties with France and Winston spoke of the fate that had befallen the French people. The French Government, he recalled, had, at their own suggestion, bound themselves with the Allies, not to make a separate peace with the enemy. At the time of the collapse of French resistance, it was the duty of the French Government and it was also in their interest to go to North Africa, where they would have been at the head of the French Empire. There, with British aid, they would have had overwhelming seapower. They would have had the use of all the gold they had lodged beyond the seas.

"If they had done this, Italy might have been driven out of the war before the end of 1940, and France would have held her place as a nation in the counsels of the Allies and at the conference-

table of the victors. But their generals misled them. When I warned them that Britain would fight on alone whatever they did, their generals told their Prime Minister and his divided Cabinet, 'In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken.' Some chicken ! Some neck !"

The men of Bordeaux, the men of Vichy lay prostrate at the foot of the conqueror. They fawned upon him. "What," asked Winston, "have they got out of it ? The fragment of France which is left to them is just as powerless, just as hungry as, and even more miserable, because more divided, than the occupied regions themselves. Hitler from day to day plays a cat-and-mouse game with these tormented men. One day he will charge them a little less for holding their countrymen down. Another day he will let out a few thousand broken prisoners of war from the one-and-a-half or one-and-three-quarter millions he has collected. Or again, he will shoot a hundred French hostages to give them a taste of the lash. On these blows and favours the Vichy Government have been content to live from day to day. But even this will not go on indefinitely. At any moment it may suit Hitler's plans to brush them away. Their only guarantee is Hitler's good faith, which, as everyone knows, biteth like the adder and stingeth like the asp."

To the delight of his hearers and of French-speaking Canada, Winston broke into French to greet the French national resurrection.

"Partout dans la France occupée et inoccupée (car leur sort est égal), ces honnêtes gens, ce grand peuple, la nation française, se redresse. L'espoir se rallume dans les coeurs d'une race guerrière, même désarmée, berceau de la liberté révolutionnaire et terrible aux vainqueurs esclaves. Et partout, on voit le point du jour, et la lumière grandit, rougeâtre, mais claire. Nous ne perdrions jamais la confiance que la France jouera le rôle des hommes libres et qu'elle reprendra par des voies dures sa place dans la grande compagnie des nations libératrices et victorieuses. Ici, au Canada, où la langue française est honorée et parlée, nous nous tenons prêts et armés pour aider et pour saluer cette résurrection nationale."

Winston's stay in America lasted for a month and apart from four appearances in public, it was devoted to laborious days and nights of planning. He and the British representatives conferred with the spokesmen of America, Russia, China, the Netherlands and some of the South American republics. The year 1942 was begun by the signing of the joint Declaration of the United Nations —twenty-six states pledged to the overthrow of Hitlerism. During those Washington discussions the first steps were taken for the unification of command, which was to be fruitfully extended at later stages of the war. Operations in the Far East were placed under the supreme command of Wavell, a selection made by the

President himself.<sup>1</sup> An Anglo-American Chief of Staffs Committee was established and a Pacific War Council.

In the vital sphere of supply measures of co-operation were also agreed upon and joint organizations were brought into being—a Munitions Adjustment Board, a Shipping Adjustment Board and a Raw Materials Board.

For twelve days there was no news of the movements of the Prime Minister and then on January 17th came the announcement that he was back in the Home Country. There was a general feeling of relief that the return had been safely accomplished. While the enemy had been speculating about his whereabouts, Winston had slipped away from Washington and crossed the Atlantic in the flying-boat Berwick.

Stringent secrecy had been observed about the plans for the return journey. The President, by his own wish, had not been privy to the arrangements and was not aware up to the last minute whether his guest would travel home by plane, ship, or submarine. The flying-boat Berwick had been held in readiness for some days. Flying-time was worked out so that the hazards of the flight could be reduced to a minimum. That part of the trip exposed to the attentions of the enemy's long-ranging Focke Wulfes was accomplished in the hours of darkness and the final stage, under the protection of our own fighter aircraft, in the light of dawn, to gain the advantage of a daylight landing.

On the way home Winston landed at Bermuda to address a hurriedly convened Assembly in the Sessions House at Hamilton on January 15th. He was gratified to note that he, the leader of the Mother of Parliaments, was speaking before the "second oldest Parliament in the world" with an unbroken continuity from 1620.

With a following wind the Berwick covered the 3,330 miles from Bermuda to Plymouth in eighteen hours. During the flight Winston, in his siren suit, took over the controls. "It's very different," he remarked to the Irish pilot, Kelly Rogers, "from the 'plane I flew in 1913."

At Paddington all available members of the Cabinet were present to welcome home their chief. A personal message from the King congratulated him on his safe return. The Prime Minister could look back with satisfaction on a mission of outstanding success. As a White House announcement recorded "complete understanding" had been reached on joint planning and for the present and future military and naval operations. Of no less importance, the visit had been fruitful in goodwill. President Roosevelt testified to the results achieved.

<sup>1</sup> This arrangement had to be modified in the light of the reverses in the Far East. Wavell, deprived by losses of a large part of his command, returned to take charge in India; MacArthur, after the Americans had been expelled from the Philippines, became supreme commander of Allied land, sea, and air forces in the S.W. Pacific.

"Mr. Churchill and I understand each other," said the President, "our motives and our purposes. Together during the past few weeks we have faced squarely the major military and economic problems of this world war. All in our nation have been cheered by Mr. Churchill's visit. We have been deeply stirred by his great message to us. We wish him a safe return to his home. He is welcome in our midst now and in the days to come."

Politically it was a chilly home-coming.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Critics*

DURING his mission to America, Winston Churchill had been engaged on concerting plans for the winning of battles. Back in London he was obliged to exercise the art that wins debates.

It would repay an investigator to make an examination into the working in war-time of the differing systems of government of the three principal allies. The blessings of our Parliamentary democracy are manifest. But, there are the times when the head of our executive must envy the President of the United States and the Chief of State of the Soviet Union their greater measure of political security. The American President is elected for four years and during his period of office his opponents, however they may revile, cannot unseat him. Congress may block all his legislation, but nevertheless as Chief of the Executive he can, within the constitution, effectively carry on the government of the country. The Russian Constitution is scarcely notable for the scope it offers for the operations of a Parliamentary opposition.

Under our system, political opponents of the Executive have greater advantages. The existence of the Government of the day is dependent upon the will of the House of Commons which invests the individual member of Parliament with a greater measure of authority than belongs to the members of other, less fortunate legislatures. During the great days of 1940 the voice of the Parliamentary critic was stilled, but with the recession of extreme peril he began to re-emerge. By 1942 he was again in full tongue and, during a succession of minor crises, gave proof that his vigour was unimpaired.

Winston's return from the United States was made the occasion for the release of the feelings of dissatisfaction that had been generated during his absence.

It was a bleak outlook. In December he had left a country that

was exhilarated at the acquisition of a new Ally. In January he returned to find that spirits were flagging under the chilling influence of bad news from the Far East. Withdrawal followed withdrawal in Malaya and the Japanese were extending their penetrations by landings in Borneo, Celebes and New Guinea.

Had he not been otherwise informed, the columns of the London Press would have brought home to the Prime Minister the change in the political temper. A leading article in *The Times* newspaper would have completed his enlightenment. While proclaiming the utmost confidence in Winston Churchill's leadership, *The Times* expressed a very considerable lack of confidence in his administration and it called, in particular, for the appointment of a Minister of Production. Now that a new and broader design had entered into Allied strategy, fresh demands, it was asserted, were being made upon Mr. Churchill's trusted leadership. Gratitude in politics was a lively sense of favours to come and rightly so. Expectation not satisfaction moved the democratic Parliamentary machine and, pursued the leader-writer astringently, "it is in no great danger at the moment of being clogged by excessive satisfaction." Governments in war time wore themselves out quickly and Mr. Churchill's team could claim no exemption from the harsh rule. In its power to relieve and replace Ministers democracy had a great and saving resource. The Prime Minister was exhorted to consider how the strength of his administration might be recruited from its lower ranks, or from Parliament or even from outside Parliament, or by giving new opportunities to colleagues who had proved themselves.

In the House, the critics fired their first shots on the minor issue of the broadcasting of the speech the Prime Minister was to make. On his return it was made known that he would deliver one of his periodic war reviews, and would broadcast to the nation. A three days' war debate was also arranged and Winston was to open it. On his first reappearance in the House, Winston invited members to sanction the recording of his speech so that it might be available for subsequent broadcasting and he might be spared the labour of repeating it before the microphone. It had been represented to him, he said, that large numbers of persons, in the Dominions as well as at home, would like to listen to the actual speech or parts of it, rather than to a news summary, and he hoped that the House would be disposed from time to time to grant this indulgence to him "or any successor I may have in the war."

There was opposition to the indulgence. Hore Belisha found reasons for objection. While recognizing the desire of the public to hear the speech, he frigidly invited the Prime Minister to bear in mind that Parliament was not a platform but a representative assembly, and he suggested that a small committee of members should consider the matter.

The next issue of *The Times* elaborated the argument. The House of Commons was a deliberative assembly and even the Prime Minister in making a speech submitted himself to the criticism and judgment of the great assembly of which he was a member. The Prime Minister was bluntly told that he must not regard his position as being "analogous" with that of the President of the United States.

At the next sitting of the House Winston withdrew his request. Doubtless the champions of ancient privilege had by their objections saved the ancient seat of government from grave consequences. The infection of the insidious microphone is incalculable in its consequences. But the jealous champions of the rights of the House might have spared a thought for the wishes of the electors, whose preferences could scarcely be in doubt. The Prime Minister's popularity at the microphone had long been beyond question. Electors deprived of an opportunity of hearing his voice could only reflect on the limited and partial vision of the champions of democracy.

Winston himself took occasion to remind the House that same week of its obligations to the electors. A debate had been arranged on aerodrome defence and a member suggested that in view of military secrets involved part of the debate should be in public and part in private session.

The Prime Minister replied that it would be necessary for the Secretary of State to make his statement in public. "There has been," he said, "a lot of discussion about the matter in the country and after all the House has certain duties to the country. Public opinion is affronted if discussion on an important topic is withheld. I think that after all the talk there has been we have a right to put our case—even the government in time of war have some rights. . . ."

The three days' debate on the war situation was to open on January 27th. On the previous morning, Sir William Beveridge appeared as featured letter-writer in *The Times* to reiterate the arguments of the "after Washington" leader. He found that a dilemma was confronting the British public. "The whole people with exceptions probably still insignificant," he wrote, "want Mr. Churchill to lead them through war to victory. But a growing and by now I believe a considerable proportion of the people feel that they need a different Government." The Prime Minister had hitherto resolutely rejected the form of government which led the country to victory in 1918—that was a War Cabinet composed of persons free from administrative duties and with authority unquestionably superior to that of all executive Ministers. Sir William was confirmed in his faith in Mr. Lloyd George's Cabinet by "seeing how congested, how lumbering, how lacking in speed and decision" was the central conduct of affairs under Churchill. So he invited the Prime Minister to resolve the nation's dilemma by

"remaining Prime Minister" but revising some of his views and deciding to change both the structure and some of the personnel of his Government.

Winston decided that the debate should be made the occasion for a vote of confidence in the Government. His decision was not relished by the critics, who represented that they were being placed in a false position.

At the outset of his speech Winston replied to this argument and brushed it aside. "From time to time in the life of any Government," he began, "there come occasions which must be clarified." No one who had read the newspapers of the previous few weeks could doubt that such an occasion was at hand.

It had been suggested that there should be a three-days' debate, in which the Government would, no doubt, be lustily belaboured by some of those with lighter burdens to carry and that at the end Members should separate without a division. "In this case sections of the Press which are hostile—and there are some whose hostility is pronounced—could declare that the Government's credit was broken and it might be even hinted after all that has passed and all the discussion there has been, that it had been privately intimated to me that I should be very reckless if I asked for a vote of confidence in Parliament." The matter did not end there. These reports could be flashed all over the world and repeated in enemy broadcasts night after night to show that the Prime Minister had no right to speak for the nation and that the Government was about to collapse.

There was yet another aspect. Britain was no longer alone but at the centre of twenty-six united nations comprising more than three-quarters of the population of the globe. "Whoever speaks for Britain at this moment must be known to speak not only in the name of the people—and that I feel pretty sure I may—but in the name of Parliament and above all of the House of Commons. It is a genuine public interest that requires that these facts should be made manifest afresh in a formal way.

"It is because things have gone badly and worse is to come that I demand a vote of confidence. I do not see why this should hamper anyone. If a member has helpful criticisms to make or even severe corrections to administer, that may be perfectly consistent with thinking that, in respect of the Administration such as it is, he might go farther and fare worse. But if an hon. gentleman dislikes the Government very much and feels that it is in the public interest that it should be broken up, he ought to have the manhood to testify to his convictions in the Lobby. . . . There is no need to be mealy-mouthed in debate and no one should be chicken-hearted in voting.

"The House of Commons, which is at present the most powerful

representative assembly in the world, must also—I am sure will also bear in mind the effect produced abroad by all its proceedings. We have also to remember how oddly foreigners view our country and its way of doing things. When Rudolf Hess flew over here some months ago he firmly believed he had only to gain access to certain circles in this country for what he described as the 'Churchill clique' to be thrown out of power and for a Government to be set up with which Hitler could negotiate a magnanimous peace. The only importance attaching to the opinions of Hess is the fact that he was fresh from the atmosphere of Hitler's intimate table. But I can assure you that since I have been back in this country I have had anxious inquiries from a dozen countries and reports of enemy propaganda in a score of countries all turning upon the point whether His Majesty's Government is to be dismissed from power or not. This may seem silly to us but in those mouths abroad it is hurtful and mischievous to the common effort."

Having thus invited the critics to come at him, Winston entered upon a strategic survey. In Churchillian phrases he posed to the House the dilemma that at every new crisis of the war had had to be faced by the Government. Man-power and munitions of war were not sufficient for all the fronts in every part of the world : where should they be employed?

When the Germans were blasting their way through Russia, the Government decided that raw materials and munitions formed the best aid that Britain could give. The Government sent to Premier Stalin ("that, I gather, is how he wishes to be addressed") exactly what he asked. In the autumn the German panzer spearheads menaced the Caucasus and thus, ultimately, the lands of the Near East and Egypt and the Nile Valley. Rommel was preparing an attack on Tobruk as a preliminary to a new offensive against Egypt. The Government, in these circumstances, approved General Auchinleck's plans for building up a delaying force in the Near East while preparations were made to try to "make a good job" of Rommel. To this latter end everything was concentrated to which they could lay their hands. General Auchinleck's objective was simple—he set himself to destroy Rommel's Army.

"Now, when we see how events, which so often mock and falsify human effort and design, have shaped themselves, I am sure this was a right decision." Cyrenaica had been regained, though it had still to be held. Rommel's Army had not been destroyed, but nearly two-thirds of it were wounded, prisoners or dead. . . . We had never had in action more than 45,000 men against enemy forces much more than double as strong. "It seems to me," commented Winston, "that this heroic epic struggle in the desert, though there have been many local reverses and many ebbs and flows, has tested our manhood in a searching fashion, and has proved not

only that our men can die for king and country—everyone knew that—but that they can kill.”

Having survived thus far by a small margin, where should we have been had the Government yielded to the clamour, so loud three or four months before, that we should invade France and the Low Countries? On the walls could still be seen the inscription “Second Front Now.” Let them imagine what our position would have been had we yielded to that vehement temptation. Every ton of our shipping, every flotilla, every aeroplane, the whole strength of our army would be committed and would be fighting for life on the French shores or on the shores of the Low Countries. All the troubles of the Far East and the Middle East would have sunk into insignificance compared with the question of another and far worse Dunkirk.

“I suppose there are some of those who were vocal and voluble and even clamant for a second front to be opened in France, who are now going to come up bland and smiling and ask why it is that we have not ample forces in Malaya, Burma, Borneo and Celebes. . . . There are people who talk and bear themselves as if they had prepared for this war with great armaments and long and careful preparations. But that is not true. In two and a half years of fighting we have only just managed to keep our heads above water.

“When I was called upon to be Prime Minister, now nearly two years ago, there were not many applicants for the job. Since then, perhaps, the market has improved. In spite of the shameful negligence, gross muddles, blatant incompetence, complacency and lack of organizing which are daily attributed to us—and from which chidings we endeavour to profit—we are beginning to see our way through. . . .

“While facing Germany and Italy here and in the Nile Valley we have never had any power to provide effectively for the defence of the Far East.

“Had we started to scatter our forces over those immense areas in the Far East, we should have been ruined. If we had moved large armies of troops urgently needed on the war fronts to regions which were not at war and might never be at war we should have been altogether wrong, we should have cast away the chance, which has now become something more than a chance, of all of us emerging safely from the terrible plight in which we were plunged.”

An even more limiting factor than troops and equipment was that of transport. Every scrap of shipping that could be drawn away from vital supply routes, every U-boat escort that could be diverted from the battle of the Atlantic, had been busy to the utmost capacity to carry men and munitions to the Near Eastern battle-fields.

There plainly stated in terms of strategy and man-power was

the outstanding question on which the House had to make up its mind. Were the Government right in giving marked priority in the distribution of forces and equipment to Russia, to Libya, and, to a lesser degree, to the Levant-Caspian danger, while, for the time being, accepting a far lower standard in the Far East? There were not the resources to meet all the perils and pressures. The question was : which?

From strategy Winston turned to personalities and the demand for ministerial scapegoats. For the broad strategic decisions he took, he said, the fullest responsibility—"If we have handled our resources wrongly, no one is so much to blame as I. Why then should I be called upon to pick out scapegoats, to throw blame on generals, or airmen or soldiers? Why should I be called upon to drive away loyal and trusted colleagues and friends to appease the clamour of certain sections of the British and Australian Press, or to take the edge off our reverses? I should be ashamed to do such a thing at such a time and if I were capable of doing it, believe me, I should be incapable of rendering the country or this House any further service. . . . I could not possibly descend to what the German radio repeatedly credits me with—an attempt to get out of difficulties in which I really have the main load, by offering up scapegoats to public displeasure. . . .

"A variety of attacks are made upon the composition of the Government. It is said that it is formed upon a party and political basis. But so is the House of Commons. It is silly to extol the Parliamentary system and then in the next breath to say : 'away with party and with politics.' From one quarter I am told that the leaders of the Labour Party ought to be dismissed from the Cabinet. This would be a return to party government pure and simple. From opposite quarters it is said that no one who approved of Munich should be allowed to hold office. To do that would be to cast reflection upon the great majority of the nation at that time and also to deny the strongest party in the House any proportionate share in the National Government, which again might cause inconvenience."

Winston dealt with the specific case of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Mr. Duff Cooper, then returning from his mission in the Far East. It had been suggested that Duff Cooper should be made to bear the blame for Allied misfortunes. "When," said the Premier, "I am invited under threats of unpopularity to myself or the Government, to victimize the Chancellor of the Duchy and throw him to the wolves, I say to those who make this amiable suggestion, I can only say to them : 'I much regret that I am unable to gratify your wishes'—or words to that effect." The laughter which greeted this observation showed that the House appreciated the translation of a homely phrase into Parliamentary language.

As to the dangers facing Australia, all would sympathize with our kith and kin now that British and American sea-power had, for the time being, been withdrawn. Doubtless the Japanese game would be to "make hell while the sun shines." Nevertheless, they were more likely to concentrate on securing their prizes in the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies and Malaya rather than to plan the very ambitious operation of an invasion of Australia.

So Winston passed to his peroration, discerning a light gleaming behind the clouds and demanding a declaration of confidence as "an additional weapon in the armoury of the United Nations."

The speech brought about a considerable change of feeling at Westminster. It was conceded that the Prime Minister had provided yet one more example of the quality that had given him his commanding ascendancy in the people's confidence. Members, generally, were relieved to have their anxieties reduced if not allayed.

A wide range of topics was touched upon by the speakers in the extended and rambling debate that followed. No fewer than 618 columns of the official report were needed to report the three days of oratory. For Winston there was more praise than criticism—indeed the customary formula was to preface attacks on the Ministry with professions of confidence in its head. The chief reproach against him was that he took too much responsibility upon himself and erected too effective an umbrella over his colleagues. Few members challenged his arguments on strategy, but complaints were general about the deficiencies of production and there were powerful appeals for the appointment of a Production Minister.

Pethick Lawrence denounced the anti-Churchill faction. During the absence of the Prime Minister in America, he said, it was clear that there had been a certain amount of backstairs intrigue. Those engaged in it paid lip-service to the Premier's leadership while in fact they were seeking to undermine it. Mr. Churchill was entitled to regard criticism from this source as tainted—if he thought it of sufficient importance to regard it at all. There were certain people whose heart was not in the war effort at all but in their own self-interests : Mr. Churchill should cause a drastic purge to be made of these backsliders. The vast majority of British people did not belong to this contemptible group.

Erskine-Hill, Chairman of the 1922 Committee, went back to the simple language of our ancestors to describe those who exploited the peril of the country for their own interests and sought to weaken the Central Government. Always, he said, there were people who would wag their scuts on every dunghill.

G. V. Peat thought that the Prime Minister's position was being made intolerable by continuous pin-pricks and little intrigues round

every corner. S. O. Davis regretted that the vast potential arsenal of human and material power in India had been neglected.

Sir Herbert Williams found the vote of confidence not to his liking ; it was like a parson in church beginning his service with a vote of confidence in the Almighty. He could not vote for the Government after all the mistakes that had been made. No one more than he wished Mr. Churchill to continue as Prime Minister—but not in his present functions ; he should not also be Minister of Defence. The War Cabinet required a Minister of Production but not a Foreign Minister, whose office should cease to function.

Henderson Stewart, East Fife's Liberal Nationalist, recited what he termed a melancholy list of reverses in our campaigns in Libya and the Far East. He did not venture so far as to say that the Government were wholly responsible, but he did pronounce them to be worthy of the blunt censure of the House.

On the second day the debate was resumed by Sir John Wardlaw-Milne, Kidderminster's Unionist member, chairman of the probing committee into the nation's expenditure. One of the committee's recent reports had startled opinion in this country and the United States, with the assertion that our war factories were still not being employed to more than 75 per cent of their capacity. Wardlaw-Milne was much concerned about production. He developed four main points—personal confidence in the Prime Minister ; a desire to see the Government strengthened ; anxiety about the state of production with advocacy of the appointment of a Minister ; complaint about the contrast between the complacent statements as to our prospects in the Pacific theatre and the series of reverses that had followed. He conveyed his opinions about the Ministry by resort to metaphors and illuminants. For its desire and determination to win the war, the Government was to him, as a whole, a great and shining light. But in other matters it was sometimes no better than a gas jet. If there were to be no change from the determination to preserve the existing system for production, it was nothing more, he was afraid, than a farthing dip.

Major Cazalet found it a nice point whether criticism of the Government in time of war was the highest form of patriotism or the basest form of treachery.

Beverley Baxter considered that while the task of the House was to criticize the Government, yet when the work of Government was thereby made impossible, it was time to turn upon the critics. All the same, he deplored the range of the Prime Minister's umbrella, sheltering his whole Ministry. The House was being badly done by if it were not to be allowed to criticize individual ministers and, if necessary, urge their removal. The Government was emerging into a one-man government. Even Napoleon had had his Marshals. Mr. Churchill by a combination of despotism and paternalism<sup>was</sup>

reducing his ministers to lieutenants. There were no marshals among them "unless it be Lord Beaverbrook who has made himself a Marshal"—a quip at the expense of his former employer that gained the hon. member in the reports the distinction of "some laughter."

Emmanuel Shinwell, victor of a once famous fight with Ramsay MacDonald at Seaham Harbour, was a critic of the Government, but prefaced his criticisms with a tribute to the Prime Minister for his heartening speeches in America and for his magnificent contribution in cementing the relations between the two great English-speaking peoples. Having urged Winston to abandon his stubborn attitude over the appointment of a Production Minister, he quoted from Macaulay's celebrated passage on the younger Pitt :

"It may seem paradoxical to say that the incapacity which Pitt showed in all that related to the conduct of the war is, in some sense, the most decisive proof that he was a man of very extraordinary abilities. Assuredly one-tenth part of his errors and disasters would have been fatal to the power and influence of any minister who had not possessed in the highest degree the talents of a parliamentary leader. While his schemes were confounded, his predictions falsified, while the coalitions which he laboured to form were falling to pieces, his authority over the House of Commons was constantly becoming more and more absolute. If some great misfortune had spread dismay through the ranks of his majority, that dismay lasted only till he rose from the Treasury Bench, drew up his haughty head, stretched his arm with commanding gesture and poured forth in deep sonorous tones the lofty language of inexhaustible hope and inflexible resolution. Thus, through a long and calamitous period, every disaster that happened without the walls of Parliament was regularly followed by a triumph within them."

"Does my right hon. friend," Shinwell asked, "recognize himself in that vivid and colourful description?"

Major Randolph Churchill, with restraint of filial admiration, paid no tribute to the Prime Minister but descended upon the critics and the House of which they were members. He had been particularly amused by those members of the Conservative Party who were so upset at the bad Government and were speculating whether they could strain their consciences far enough to support it. Perhaps it was not a very good Government, but ought they not to ask themselves : "Is it a very good House of Commons?"

A sidelight on the Labour Party was furnished by Mr. McGovern, I.L.P. member for Shettleston, who showed that the undermining of leaders by insidious propaganda was not confined to one side of the House. Staunch Labour people in the country, he said, were asking : What is this idea of which we hear about the incompetence and inefficiency of our people in the Government? Who

spread these stories? Our people ask: What is this I hear about Greenwood? (Member without Portfolio). What is this about the inability and lack of courage of Attlee? (Lord Privy Seal). What is this I hear about the pompous Dalton? (Minister of Economic Warfare). This secret, round-the-table propaganda was undermining the Government.

Clement Attlee sought to remove the impression that the Prime Minister was a dictator and never listened to anybody else. He was one man working in a team—a sound democratic man and a sound House of Commons man. Anybody less like a dictator they would not find.

In contrast with other critics whose attacks had been made on unspecified members of the Government, Captain McEwen specified a Minister of whose services the Prime Minister should deprive himself—that man was Lord Beaverbrook whose effect on any given industry was that of a perniciously mixed cocktail, highly stimulating for an hour or two, but leaving a particularly virulent hangover for ever after.

Commander Bowen suggested that the Prime Minister should relinquish the post of Minister of Defence and abolish it. The Government was a one-man band of which proof was to be found in the way the Front Bench behaved, like a flock of sheep, when the Prime Minister was absent in the United States.

Sir Archibald Southby, seeking information about the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, repeated the charge whispered outside the House—"I have even heard it stated that orders were given for an aircraft carrier to accompany those ships and that those orders were countermanded by the Prime Minister." Was that true?

D. N. Pritt, K.C., arguing that the Ministry was not the best that was possible, considered that a long anti-Fascist record was the best recommendation for inclusion. It was not necessary to go back very far in their history to discover that with some Ministers anti-Fascism, if it existed at all, had hardly poked its nose above the ground.

Sir Hugh O'Neill thought the Prime Minister had put too much stress on the constitutional doctrine that the Government must stand or fall as a whole. If the Prime Minister thought it necessary he could bring about the resignation of members of his administration—"just as, in recent times, Hore Belisha resigned as Secretary for War, not, as we all know, because he himself wanted to resign but because the Prime Minister put it to him that his resignation would be acceptable."

Somerset de Chair, back in the House from a mission to the Near East, spoke of the difference he found after a year's absence. When he left the country the Battle of Britain was drawing to a close. The House was united and resolute and a back-bencher was

almost as extinct as the Dodo or the Great Auk. The country had its back to the wall and was fighting in complete unity. It was a shock to return to a House in which there was so much criticism of the Government. What was the cause? He doubted whether the war position was so much worse. His impression was otherwise and he added—"The Prime Minister may agree he is wedded to the Parliamentary system by indissoluble ties of long association and that the Mother of Parliaments is somewhat in the position of his spouse. It struck me that the spouse was a little ruffled by his flirting with the more glamorous British public—indeed it seemed he had been flirting with the public in the United States and Canada. The mood of the House seemed to be that of a woman scorned and she was ready to tear his eyes out whatever he suggested."

Hore Belisha reminded the House that while Parliament could break Governments it could not form them. That was the indefeasible right, the most basic of all rights, of the Prime Minister. Were he to yield up his Ministers to clamour or pressure he would be derogating from the high traditions of his office. Hore Belisha recalled the fate of Haldane in the last war and of the right hon. gentleman himself. In each case the country had suffered a grievous loss.

Earl Winterton regarded it as abundantly clear that the Prime Minister had a greater power in matters of strategy than that possessed by any Prime Minister, not even excluding Lloyd George. "I would say that the right hon. gentleman can literally, by the great position he occupies, win or lose this war for us. I believe he can and will win it, but I think it right to add that if the time comes when the least of us think that his methods are losing it, it will be our duty by every means in our power to overthrow him."

After three days of debate, Winston wound up in a conciliatory speech that suited the temper of a House bent on conciliation. Almost at the outset he made a concession that was more welcome to his supporters, perhaps, than to his critics, who were thereby robbed of one of their targets. The decision was made known in well turned Churchillian phrases. He would, he assured the House, be ready to profit by helpful lines of thought even though they came from the most hostile quarters, and he went on: "I shall not be like that saint to whom I have before referred in this House but whose name I have unhappily forgotten, who refused to do right because the Devil prompted him. Neither shall I be deterred from doing what I am convinced is right by the fact that I have thought differently about it in some distant or even in some remote past." So he came to his point—the creation of a Ministry of Production, a development to which he had been converted by the appointment of Donald Nelson to a similar post in the

United States. For harmonious working, the equivalent office was necessary here. "I have been for some weeks," he said, "carefully considering this and the strong opinions which have been expressed in the House—even though I do not share their reasoning in all respects—have reinforced the conclusion with which I returned from the United States."

There followed a statement in some detail on the loss of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*. Why had those two ships been sent to the Far East, seeing that they could not be properly protected by aircraft? "The answer is that the decision was taken in the hope primarily of deterring the Japanese from going to war at all: or, failing that, of deterring Japan from sending convoys into the Gulf of Siam." The *Prince of Wales* was the only available ship which could have reached Far Eastern waters in time to have produced any deterrent effect. "The suggestion made by Sir A. Southby that the Naval Staff desired to send an aircraft carrier and were overruled by me is as mischievous as it is untrue. It was always the intention that any fast ships proceeding to the Far East should be accompanied by an aircraft carrier. Unfortunately, at the time, with the exception of an aircraft carrier in home waters, not a single ship of this type was available."

Having failed to achieve the deterrent objects the Government had in view, why were the ships sent to oppose the Japanese landings? "Admiral Tom Phillips, as vice-chief of the Naval Staff, was fully acquainted," said the Prime Minister, "with the whole policy I have described. On December 8th, he decided, after conferring with his captain and staff officers, that in the circumstances, and in view of the movement of Japanese transports with a weak fighting escort towards the Kra peninsula, drastic and urgent naval action was required. This action, if successful, would have presented the Army with a good prospect of defeating the landings and possibly of paralysing the invasion of Malaya at its birth. The stakes on both sides were very high. The prize was great if gained; if lost, our danger most grievous. . . .

"In the opinion of the Board of Admiralty, which it is my duty to pronounce, the risks which Admiral Phillips took were fair and reasonable in the light of the knowledge which he had of the enemy when compared with the very urgent and vital issues at stake on which the whole safety of Malaya might have depended. No doubt the Admiralty will have its own inquiry for the purpose of informing itself and of studying the lessons. But I could not bring myself, on the first day that this matter was mentioned, when the information I had was most scanty, to pronounce condemnation on the audacious, daring action of Admiral Tom Phillips in going forward, although he knew the risks he ran, when the prize might have been 20,000 of the enemy drowned in the sea and a relief from the whole

catalogue of misfortunes which have since come upon us and have still to come."

But for the I.L.P. members, bent on an anti-war demonstration, there would have been no division. James Maxton entered the Division lobby against the Government, the solitary bag for his two tellers. In the other lobby 464 members supported the Government. It was a convincing demonstration to any doubters at home or abroad that the nation was behind the Prime Minister.

Before a fortnight had passed, Winston announced his choice of Lord Beaverbrook to fill the new post of Minister of Production. Sir Andrew Duncan was posted to the Ministry of Supply—an office he had held until Beaverbrook had succeeded him six months before.

The creation of the Production post met with unqualified acclaim, but the choice of Minister with scarcely universal approval. Opinion on the previous achievements of Beaverbrook was divided fairly evenly between the extremes of admiration and detraction. There was a fair measure of agreement that he was a man to expend the last ounce of a dynamic personality in time of emergency, but less conviction that his talents were those needed for a sustained task of planning. There were, too, problems of some delicacy in ministerial relationships. From the manner in which the announcements were made, political observers hazarded the conclusion that the solution of these problems had not been simple. The original announcement had given no indication of the extent of the new Minister's responsibilities. There was much speculation on the precise powers to be accorded him. In what relation was the new Minister to stand to his colleagues closely concerned with supply—to the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Minister of Aircraft Production and the Minister of Supply? And then, in the vital sphere of labour, how far were his powers to run? Here Ernest Bevin, as Minister of Labour and National Service, was directly concerned. Hitherto he had been chairman of the War Cabinet's Production Executive, a body that appeared to become redundant in view of the new appointment. But, in that event, was Beaverbrook's writ to run in the realms of labour? The Prime Minister had indeed a problem of delicacy.

After a week-end turning it over with his colleagues, Winston was ready to satisfy public curiosity with a White Paper ten paragraphs long. Under the new arrangement Lord Beaverbrook, with the authority of a member of the War Cabinet, was to be vested with the prime responsibility for all the business of war production. The Ministers of Labour and Production, it was set down, were to work in the closest co-operation. The Minister of Labour would find and supply the labour and would follow it up to see that it was not used uneconomically. To make the position clear, Winston

added the explanation, "That is exactly what the Minister of Labour does at the present time. He does that in the way that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, under the direction of the Cabinet, supplies money, follows it up and sees that it is not used uneconomically."

Public curiosity was intrigued rather than satisfied by these explanations. Clearly, it was concluded, the problem had been delicate if it had resulted in so evasive a compromise. Clearly, too, Beaverbrook's writ, if it ran at all in the realm of labour, did not run very far.

One point further was noticed in passing—while expectation had been fulfilled in the choice of Production Minister, the prophets had not been right in their further prediction that Sir Stafford Cripps was to join the Ministry. Beaverbrook was in, but our former Ambassador to Moscow was still out.

The appointment brought to a close the first phase of the period of discontent. The debate had cleared the air. The Prime Minister had received a smashing majority. The critics could look upon the production appointment as a concession to their views. In politics, however, cordiality is an ephemeral growth. The Minister of Production had scarcely had time to get his brass plate upon the door, before the entire Ministry was in the melting pot.

## CHAPTER III

### *Government Reconstruction*

IT is a national custom, when things are going badly, to blame the Government. In the early months of 1942 things were consistently bad and the critics exercised their prerogative to the full. The Empire was paying for neglect of its defences. Past failures might be the cause of present reverses, but it was the men in office who were the immediately available targets for attack. It was during this period that Winston qualified for the pronouncement by a recent author<sup>1</sup> "Mr. Churchill has had to face criticism and disparagement of a nature with which none of the other national leaders have had to compete."

Criticism and dissatisfaction found its expression at three levels. There were men of goodwill, of patriotic purpose, whose only desire was to contribute to the national cause by suggesting the means for putting wrong things right. There were the men moved by sincere doubts as to the soundness of the Prime Minister's strategic conceptions. And there were the careerists of politics,

<sup>1</sup> Brig. J. G. Smythe, V.C., *Defence is our Business*.

hungry for office, jealous of Winston's place. This latter class ranged downwards to the rag-tag-and-bobtail of politics.

The men of goodwill made their several contributions to the national cause. The malicious achieved nothing but the release of their own malice. They were the inspiration of the voices from the back-stage that sent whispered innuendoes on their rounds. For the most part these utterances were not of the quality to find expression in Press or Parliament. They did not gain the permanency of record save when Hitler and his propagandists echoed what the voices were whispering. Tadpole and Taper set the whispers going and they gained circulation amongst the hangers-on of politics. They had no effect upon the nation at large. The robust common-sense of the people was not to be disturbed by the venom of small minds. But amongst the hangers-on the whisperers created quite a stir. Tadpole and Taper were impressed by the echoes of their own malignancy. They were encouraged to search for a candidate for the highest post if that post should fall vacant—and a vacancy they persuaded themselves would occur. Bets were laid, substantial bets, that Winston would not last out the war. There was some preening of feathers among the lesser lights of near ministerial rank, who fancied their prospects. At least one man who some time afterwards was selected by Winston for office, began at this time to let it be known in the clubs that he had his qualifications—and his followers.

It was a mean and fruitless intrigue played against the sombre background of difficulty and danger. A few faint hearts were exposed by that testing time.

Bad news had been the occasion for the political fireworks in January. By mid-February the Prime Minister's predictions of further losses had been fulfilled. Throughout the opening days of February, the tidings of Allied withdrawals in the Far East were relieved only by episodes of gallantry on the part of our hard-pressed troops. We were pushed out of Malaya. After a short stand in the final fortress General Percival had to yield, and on February 15th it was the Prime Minister's melancholy duty to announce the capitulation of Singapore—"the greatest disaster to British arms which our history records."

Even this reverse was not more mortifying to the national pride than the escape of the German warships, *Gneisenau*, *Scharnhorst* and *Prinz Eugen*. Driven by the bombs of the R.A.F. from their refuge at Brest, they ran the gauntlet of the Channel. Though winged, they had got through to German waters. It was the most humiliating episode in our naval history since Dutch ships sailed up the Thames three hundred years before. The gasp of national stupefaction was almost audible.

It was a black week-end. In political circles there was an

immediate reaction. Criticisms of the previous month were renewed. Those who had called for ministerial changes remarked that remodelling of the Cabinet had not gone far, that the appointment of a Minister of Production fell short of what had been expected. William Beveridge burst into print once more to protest that the Governments conducting the present war had borne little likeness to the Administration which conducted us to victory in 1918. In the Churchill Administration all the dominant personalities from the Prime Minister down were absorbed in executive duties, whereas the essence of the Lloyd George War Cabinet was that it consisted of Ministers without departments.

When the House met on February 17th, the atmosphere of tension was unmistakable. The Prime Minister rose to make a brief statement on events. While regretting the escape of the German warships, he found some cause for satisfaction that they had abandoned their positions at Brest; thereby they had relieved us of a threat to our convoy routes. Both ships had been damaged by air attack and would be out of action for some time. "Whatever smart of disappointment or annoyance may remain in our breasts," said Winston, "that the final forfeit was not exacted, there is no doubt that the naval position on the Atlantic so far from being worsened is definitely eased."

As for the extremely grave event of the fall of Singapore, the Prime Minister had no information to add to the announcement of its capitulation, and he spoke but to administer a caution. "It would ill become the dignity of the Government and the House," he said, "and would render poor service to the Alliance of which we are a part, if we were to be drawn into agitated or excited recriminations at a time when all our minds are oppressed with a sense of tragedy and with the sorrow of so lamentable a misfortune." While he could not take part in any debate, he would provide members with the occasion for expressing their opinions if they wished to do so. "But," he added, "I hope I may be permitted to remind the House, in the extremely serious situation in which we stand, of the use that is made in hostile and even Allied countries of any loose or intemperate language into which anyone can be drawn and of the importance of the House of Commons maintaining its reputation for firmness and courage in the face of adversity."

The House was by no means satisfied with the statement. Feelings were running high, and tension was the greater because they were for the most part suppressed. Since they were denied a debate there and then, Members debated when the debate should be and found some vent for their dissatisfaction by demanding a grand inquest into all that had occurred—"calamitous things" as Winter-  
ton termed them. Winston was pressed to make known the nature

of the enquiry that was proposed into the German warships but he declined to add to the information he had given about the composition of the tribunal. "Do you really believe that will satisfy the people of the country ?" asked Anstruther Gray.

Wardlaw-Milne had come into the House expecting an immediate debate and was disturbed to find he would have to wait for the opportunity to express his views. Hugh O'Neill considered that the Prime Minister had failed to realize the immense amount of public anxiety caused by the escape of the German ships. Bellenger of Bassettlaw said there was a feeling in the country that the right kind of persons were not directing the war.

These and similar observations prompted Aneurin Bevan to inquire what the Prime Minister proposed seeing that they were neither having a debate nor not having a debate that day.

Winston rose again. He had plainly been disturbed by the temper of the House. They should have their debate, he told them ; there was not the slightest reason why they should not have it : he would give every facility for it. The House was absolute master. If its confidence were not extended to the Government and it considered it could make better arrangements for the conduct of the war, then it was its right, indeed it was its duty, to make known its opinion in the proper constitutional manner. What he deprecated was that the debate should take place in a mood of panic, an observation that drew a chorus of protesting 'Nos' from all quarters of the Chamber. In deference to the wishes of Members he gave the information that the warships inquiry would be held by a Judge of the High Court as chairman, sitting with two officers from the Navy and Air Force.

When the House rose, Members were in the mood to go to any length in their insistence on changes in the War Cabinet. Conservative M.P.s from the Midlands by formal resolution recorded their conviction that there should be reconstruction of the War Cabinet to free its members from departmental duties.

Tadpole and Taper sought to profit by the occasion. The whisperings from the political fringes were intensified. Tadpole sought a leader for the malcontents ; the Government did not want the services of Stafford Cripps, let him lead his Majesty's patriotic opposition. Taper went so far as to ask why Cripps should not captain the Government team.

The crisis was resolved before the debate took place. There was no mistaking the mood of the House and the Prime Minister was persuaded to anticipate further expression of its will. By the week-end a major reconstruction of the War Cabinet and the Ministry had been announced. In terms of numbers the War Cabinet was reduced from nine members to seven. In terms of personnel, Lord Beaverbrook and Arthur Greenwood were omitted and two recruits,

Stafford Cripps and Oliver Lyttelton, were brought in. The reduction from War Cabinet status of the Chancellor of the Exchequer involved the demotion in Ministerial rank of the diminutive Chancellor, the late Sir Kingsley Wood. The War Cabinets old and new were constituted :

*Old*

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister  
and Minister of Defence  
Clement Attlee, Lord Privy Seal  
Sir John Anderson, Lord President  
Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary  
Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Production  
Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour  
and National Service  
Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of  
the Exchequer  
Arthur Greenwood, Minister with-  
out Portfolio  
Oliver Lyttelton, Minister of State  
in the Middle East

*New*

Winston Churchill, Prime Minister  
and Minister of Defence  
Clement Attlee, Dominions Secretary  
and Deputy Prime Minister  
Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy  
Seal and Leader of the House  
Sir John Anderson, Lord President  
Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary  
Oliver Lyttelton, Minister of State  
for Production  
Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour  
and National Service

Public interest was chiefly focused on the omission of Beaverbrook and the inclusion of Cripps—changes which the politically informed hinted were not unrelated. It was a matter for surprise that the man who had been appointed to the new post of Minister of Production should within the fortnight leave the War Cabinet and the Government. The fact that Lord Beaverbrook was to undertake special duties in Washington concerned with the pooling of munitions was not accepted as the explanation. Oliver Lyttelton was recalled from the Middle East, where he had been Resident Minister, to take over the production post, though without the title and lacking, too, the 10-point White Paper to define and delimit his responsibilities. Here, again, the politically informed let it be known that certain difficulties over man-power which had arisen when Beaverbrook was appointed were likely to prove of easier solution now that Lyttelton was to hold the office. So, though the politically informed discreetly stopped short of naming names, the not-so-discreet suggested that Ernest Bevin, as Minister of Labour, had been concerned in those delicate problems over the powers of the Minister of Production which previously had given the Prime Minister concern.

On all sides the appointment of Stafford Cripps was welcomed. It seemed long ago that Sir Stafford aroused the wrath alike of Right Wing and of Left—of the Right because he was so Leftist

and of the Left because he was so independent a Socialist that the party expelled him for flouting their decisions against a Popular Front. As Ambassador to Moscow during a period of extreme delicacy he had rendered great service and the Prime Minister was complimented on choosing him as Leader of the House of Commons, in the manner that Bonar Law acted in the last war under Lloyd George. In one respect the appointment was without precedent for Sir Stafford still lay under sentence of excommunication by the Labour Party. The House was to be led by a man without a party.<sup>1</sup>

Among Cabinet Ministers below the salt, another precedent was created by the appointment of a new Secretary for War in the person of Sir James Grigg, the able Permanent Under Secretary of State in the department. Never before in the history of the Civil Service had a permanent official been promoted to succeed his political chief. Only a day or two previously the Army Estimates had been introduced by David Margesson, now the recipient of commiseration from his friends on paying the penalty for having been too efficient a Chief Whip in Neville Chamberlain days. Other personalities to vanish from the Ministry were Lord Reith, to be succeeded as Minister of Aircraft Production by Lord Portal, and Col. Moore-Brabazon, Minister of Aircraft Production, whose reported references to Russia had given rise to questions in the House from the Labour benches. There were a dozen or more changes in the junior ministerial ranks.

The completion of the Cabinet was attended by a minor incident. In response to suggestions from Australia that the voice of the Commonwealth should be heard, Winston invited R. G. Casey, Australian Minister in Washington, to become a Member of the Cabinet and to proceed to Cairo as Minister of State in the Middle East. The Prime Minister had sought the consent of Mr. Curtin, the Commonwealth Premier, but by some mischance in timing it appeared that a broadcast announcement of the appointment had previously been made. It seemed that Curtin would pay Casey the compliment of insisting that he was irreplaceable at Washington, but the matter was put to rights. Winston gained a valuable colleague but he failed in his other purpose of pleasing Commonwealth opinion by selecting an Australian for the post.

Before the promised war debate took place there was ample time for the House to weigh the chief changes that had been made. They were commended on a variety of grounds. The Prime Minister was complimented for showing himself responsive to parliamentary opinion. He was praised for having replaced a War Cabinet that had become unwieldy and anomalous with a superior instrument that should give a new impetus to the war effort. Critics of the old Administration were assured that the main points for which they

<sup>1</sup> He was reinstated by the Labour Party on March 15, 1945

contended had been conceded to them. Members of the House were given the further assurance that they had strengthened the Prime Minister's hands.

Certainly there was general satisfaction though hardly for the reasons so ingeniously assigned. Democracy from time to time appreciates a political shake-up. Loyalty in politics is a quality not rated so highly by the many as it is by Winston Churchill. It might not have been edifying when Lloyd George parted company with ministerial failures, but the multitude were diverted by the fireworks that customarily enlivened their departures.

There was no mistaking the alteration in the mood of the House when the debate began on February 25th. It was made manifest in the cordial cheer that greeted Winston as he rose to make his statement on events.

The Prime Minister gave the House his own view of the merits of the changes he had effected, and in making a comparison with the Lloyd George Cabinet that his critics had lauded, he recalled that that Administration had passed through its periods of adversity. He also gave an account of the discharge of his duties in the office of Minister of Defence.

After nearly two years of strain and struggle, Winston said, it was right and necessary that a Government, called into being in the crash of the Battle of France, should undergo both changes and re-invigoration. He regretted the loss of loyal and trusted colleagues with whom he had come through many hard times. They had no greater share than the rest of the Administration in the responsibility for the disasters in the Far East. Nevertheless he was sure that a more tensely braced and compact Administration had been formed to meet the new changes and difficulties.

Coming to a comparison with the War Cabinet of the last war, he reiterated his formerly expressed opinion that a War Cabinet entirely composed of Ministers without departments was neither practicable nor convenient. In other ways the similarity with the Lloyd George régime was fairly close.

"During most of the period from December 1916 to November 1918, the Lloyd George War Cabinet consisted of six or seven Ministers of whom only one had departmental duties—Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Leader of the House of Commons and Leader of the Conservative Party. In addition Mr. Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, although not in name a member of the War Cabinet, was so to all practical purposes and was in fact a more powerful politician than any of its members except the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

"The new War Cabinet consists of seven members, of whom three have no department. One is Prime Minister, one is Deputy Prime Minister with the Dominions Office, and one is Foreign

Secretary. In the seventh case, the Minister of Labour and National Service replaces the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the former model. I think this is right. In the last twenty-five years Labour has made immense advances in the State, and it is desirable, both on personal and on public grounds, that this office, which serves all departments, should be included.

"There may prove to be other points of resemblance. It is now the fashion to speak of the Lloyd George War Cabinet as if it gave universal satisfaction and conducted the war with unerring judgment and unbroken success. On the contrary, complaints were loud and clamant. Immense disasters, such as the slaughter of Passchendaele, the disaster at Caporetto in 1917, the destruction of the Fifth Army after March 21st, 1918—all these and others befell that rightly famous Administration. It made numerous serious mistakes. No one was more surprised than its members when the end of the war came suddenly in 1918, and there have even been criticisms about the character of the Peace which was signed and celebrated in 1919. Therefore we, in this difficult period, have other calls upon us besides that of living up slavishly to the standards and methods of the past, instructive and on the whole encouraging as they unquestionably are.

"Let me explain how the duties are divided. The members of the War Cabinet are collectively and individually responsible for the whole policy of the country, and they are the men who are alone held accountable for the conduct of the war. However, they have also particular spheres of superintendence. The Leader of the Labour Party, as head of the second largest party in the National Government, acts as Deputy Prime Minister in all things, and in addition will discharge the duties of the Dominions Secretary, thus meeting, without an addition to our numbers, the request pressed upon us from so many quarters that our relations with the Dominions, apart from those between His Majesty's various Prime Ministers, on which the Dominions are most insistent, shall be in the hands of a member of the War Cabinet.

"The Lord President of the Council presides over what is, in certain aspects, almost a parallel Cabinet concerned with home affairs. Of this body a number of Ministers of Cabinet rank are regular members, and others are invited as may be convenient. An immense mass of business is discharged at their frequent meetings, and it is only in the case of a serious difference or in very large questions that the War Cabinet as such is concerned.

"The Minister of State, who will soon be returning from Cairo, has, as his sphere of superintendence, the whole process of production in all its aspects. The White Paper which had been issued upon this subject is superseded and withdrawn, and I am not sure that the new arrangements will require to be defined so formally in a paper constitution.

"The special spheres of the remaining members of the War Cabinet are defined by the offices they hold.

"My right hon. Friend the former Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Arthur Greenwood), who has played a fine part in all affairs connected with this war, was busy with future plans for post-war reconstruction. The reduction in the size of the War Cabinet, which was held to be desirable in many quarters, has led to the elimination of this office. I must ask the House for a certain amount of time, though there will be no delay, before I am able to submit a scheme for this essential task of preparation for reconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

"The seven members of the War Cabinet can sit together either as the War Cabinet of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, responsible to the Crown and to Parliament, or they can sit in a larger gathering with representatives from the Dominions and India. Both series of meetings will continue regularly, as before.

"I will now, with the permission of the House, speak a little about my own part. At the time when I was called upon by the King to form the present Government we were in the throes of the German invasion of France and the Low Countries. I did not expect to be called upon to act as Leader of the House of Commons. I therefore sought His Majesty's permission to create and assume the style or title of Minister of Defence, because obviously the position of Prime Minister in war is inseparable from the general supervision of its conduct and the final responsibility for its result. I intended at that time that Mr. Neville Chamberlain should become Leader of the House and take the whole of the House of Commons work off my hands. This proposal was not found to be acceptable. I had myself to take the Leadership of the House as well as my other duties.

"I must admit that this parliamentary task has weighed upon me heavily. During the period for which I have been responsible I find to my horror that I have made more than twenty-five lengthy speeches to Parliament in public or in secret session, to say nothing of answering a great number of questions and dealing with many current emergencies. I have greatly valued the honour of leading the House, which my father led before me, and in which my public life has been spent for so long ; and I have always taken the greatest trouble to give it the best possible service, and even in very rough periods I have taken most particular care of its rights and interests.

"Although I feel a great sense of relief in laying down this burden, I cannot say that I do so without sorrow. I am sure, however, it is in the public interest, and I am also sure that my right hon. and learned friend the member for East Bristol, the new Lord

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Jowitt (later Lord Jowitt and Lord Chancellor in the Labour Government) was placed in charge of reconstruction, to be succeeded in turn by Lord Woolton.

Privy Seal, will prove to the House that he is a respecter of its authority and a leader capable of dealing with all the incidents, episodes and emergencies of House of Commons and parliamentary life. I shall, of course, as Prime Minister, remain always at the service of the House should the occasion require it, and I shall hope, from time to time, though I trust not too often, to seek their permission to give them a general appreciation of the progress of the war.

"Let me now speak of the office, or title, which I hold as Minister of Defence. About this there seem to be many misunderstandings. Perhaps the House will bear with me while I explain the method by which the war has been and will be conducted.

"I may say, first of all, that there is nothing which I do or have done as Minister of Defence which I could not do as Prime Minister. As Prime Minister, I am able to deal easily and smoothly with the three Service Departments, without prejudice to the constitutional responsibilities of the Secretaries of State for War and Air and the First Lord of the Admiralty. I have not, therefore, found the need for defining formally or precisely the relationship between the office of Minister of Defence when held by a Prime Minister and the three Service Departments. I have not found it necessary to define this relationship as would be necessary in the case of any Minister of Defence who was not also Prime Minister.

"There is, of course, no Ministry of Defence, and the three Service Departments remain autonomous. For the purpose of maintaining general supervision over the conduct of the war—which I do under the authority of the War Cabinet and the Defence Committee—I have at my disposal a small staff, headed by Major-General Ismay, which works under the long-established procedure and machinery of the pre-war Committee of Imperial Defence, and forms a part of the War Cabinet secretariat.

"While, as I have said, I take constitutional responsibility for everything that is done or not done, and am quite ready to take the blame when things go wrong—as they very often do, and as they are very likely to do in future in many ways—I do not, of course, conduct this war from day to day myself. It is conducted from day to day, and in its future outlook, by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, namely, the First Sea Lord, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the Chief of the Air Staff. These officers sit together every day, and often twice a day. They give executive directions and orders to the Commanders-in-chief in the various theatres. They advise me, they advise the Defence Committee and the War Cabinet, on large questions of war strategy and war policy. I am represented on the Chiefs of Staff Committee by Major-General Ismay, who is responsible for keeping the War Cabinet and myself informed on all matters requiring higher decision.

"On account of the immense scope and complexity of the task,

when fighting is going on literally all over the world, and when strategy and supply are so closely intermingled, the Chiefs of Staff Committee are assisted by a Vice-Chiefs of Staff Committee, which relieves them of a great mass of important questions of a secondary order. At the disposal of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and of the Vice-Chiefs Committee are the joint Planning Staffs and Joint Intelligence Staffs of the three Services, consisting of specially-selected officers. In addition, there are the three General Staffs of the Army, Navy and Air Force, between whom constant collaboration proceeds at all levels where combined operations are involved. I think it necessary to put this matter in some detail before the House, because, although it sounds complicated, it is necessary to understand it.

"Each of the three Chiefs of Staff has, it must be remembered, the professional executive control of the Service he represents. When, therefore, they meet together, they are not talking in a vacuum, or in theory. They meet together in a position to take immediate and responsible action, in which each can carry out his share, either singly or in combination. I do not think there has ever been a system in which the professional heads of the Fighting Services have had a freer hand or a greater or more direct influence, or have received more constant and harmonious support from the Prime Minister and the Cabinet under which they serve.

"It is my practice to leave the Chiefs of Staff alone to do their own work, subject to my general supervision, suggestion and guidance. For instance, in 1941, out of 462 meetings of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, most of them lasting over two hours, I presided at only 44 myself. In addition, however, there are, of course, the meetings of the Defence Committee, at which the Service Ministers are present, as well as other Ministerial members, and there are the Cabinet meetings at which the Chiefs of Staff are present when military matters are discussed. In my absence from this country, or should I be at any time incapacitated, my deputy has acted and will act for me.

"Such is the machinery which, as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, I have partly elaborated and partly brought into existence. I am satisfied that it is the best that can be devised to meet the extraordinary difficulties and dangers through which we are passing. There is absolutely no question of making any change in it of a serious or fundamental character as long as I retain the confidence of the House and of the country. However tempting it might be to some when much trouble lies ahead to step aside adroitly and put someone else up to take the blows, the heavy and repeated blows, which are coming, I do not intend to adopt that cowardly course, but, on the contrary, to stand to my post and persevere in accordance with my duty as I see it."

The debate that followed the Prime Minister's statement was vastly different in tone and temper from what had been expected during the crisis of seven days before. Then, tension almost reached the point of a quarrel between the House and the Prime Minister as to the structure of the Cabinet and the functions of its members. Reconstitution of the Government had taken the sting out of the Westminster air.

The pages of Hansard with their full record of two days of speeches well repay study for the light they shed on the work of a Parliamentary assembly in stress of war. The responsibilities of the M.P.s in time of national crisis are difficult and delicate. In the final reckoning theirs is the responsibility for the proper discharge of affairs. They are returned by the nation. Their corporate will makes and unmakes the Ministry. But, though theirs is the ultimate responsibility, the conduct of affairs is entrusted to the Executive, and Ministers, no less than Generals in the field and Admirals at sea, must have freedom to carry out the duties imposed upon them according to their judgment and abilities. Parliament must proceed with discretion so that criticism does not undermine confidence. On this occasion, when public opinion had been profoundly disturbed, Parliament would have failed in its duty had it not registered a sense of anxiety. But while expressing public concern, Members did not for the most part transgress the limits which men of goodwill should set themselves.

As Mr. Denman observed, the relationship between the Executive and the House was one of enduring importance that must be put right. The House stood very high in the list of forces capable of losing the war. The regrettable ill-feeling of the previous week were it to become general would endanger the success of the war efforts. The House had its main function ; to do its best to put things right. It should, he advised, show less willingness to reflect immediately the agitations outside it. The Government for its part should show greater rapidity in understanding what Members were seeking.

The debate was discursive. Some Members talked strategy and some spoke of the reconstruction. The widely ranging choice of subject passed from Civil Defence to India, scientists in war time, propaganda, the shortcomings of the B.B.C., an Empire going to the dogs and working-men to dog-races. Many speakers drew attention to faults and failures in various parts of the national machine of war production but criticism for the most part was constructive. The speeches of which the sole intent was to vilify the Prime Minister and his colleagues stood out by contrast with the general tone.

James Griffith, of Llanelly, leading off from the Opposition front bench, had little to say of the changes in the personnel of

the Government team, but raised one point which was echoed at all stages of the debate—the need for greater sacrifice on the home front. There was something repulsive, at a time when men were giving their lives on land, sea and in the air, in the continuance of some of the trivialities of peace. On the very day that Singapore fell there was greyhound-racing—horse-racing for the wealthy, dog-racing for the poor.

Commander King Hall endorsed the suggestion for stopping all racing and wanted to go farther. He would have rationed tobacco and alcohol, and restricted the sale of women's cosmetics.

James Maxton, half a party in his own person, welcomed the appointment of Stafford Cripps but doubted whether he could make good the loss in the Cabinet of the two capable but differing personalities of Beaverbrook and Greenwood. This double duty was the task for a giant and he congratulated the right honourable and learned gentleman on his courage in undertaking it. James Maxton also had doubts about the choice of James Grigg for the War Office. "I am not condemning the appointment," he said, "but I cannot understand how it is that when the political head of a department is dropped, presumably for not coming up to standard in some direction, the Permanent Under-Secretary, who has been in the position for a very considerable period of time, with very high executive responsibilities, should walk into the place vacated by his political chief. It may be all right but it seems to be bringing a new element into our Civil Service which we have prided ourselves on keeping out."

Other speakers took up the point. Sir Alfred Knox, with the rank of Major-General, did not appear to be able to bring himself to give Grigg the title of his new office. "I ask the new official in charge of the War Office," was the Major-General's periphrasis.

Hore Belisha deplored Margesson's departure from the War Office ("he loved the Army and served it with a genuine faith") and regretted the passing of Beaverbrook ("at the time of the Battle of Britain his genius manifested itself in an infinite capacity for making plans").

J. J. Davidson from Maryhill, Glasgow, voiced indignation over the War Office change. "We have," he said, "heard complaint after complaint with regard to War Office administration, and yet to appease a critical House, the Minister who, generally speaking, accepts the guidance and advice of his Permanent Secretary, is changed for the man who could really be held responsible. It is an ominous position for every Minister. How are they to treat their Permanent Secretaries in future? Is there to be distrust brought into the departments? Will Ministers feel confident that nothing is being done to undermine them?"

Pethick-Lawrence expressed similar concern, though it was not

a personal matter. He knew James Grigg very well and believed him to be a forcible and fearless man who, if anyone could, would cut through Red Tape, and get rid of Blimperty. The Prime Minister, whom he served at the Treasury for many years, was doubtless aware of those qualities. Nevertheless the appointment should not become a precedent.

Garfield Weston devoted a maiden speech to regretting the departure from the Ministry of his fellow-countryman and great Canadian, Lord Beaverbrook, whose courage, tenacity and drive would be missed. "We are told," he said, "that he has gone because he has asthma. He has had asthma for twenty years and if asthma does to a man what it has done to him, I would enjoy the experience of hearing every honourable Member coughing so vigorously that no one would hear a word I am saying."

Vernon Bartlett would have liked to see Lloyd George in the War Cabinet—an omission, as was learned later, that was due to refusal of the veteran of the last war to accept the invitation extended to him by the leader in this.

P. G. Barstow did not agree that there had been a change in the Government. It was the same body of people. Big business was till in the saddle.

Mr. Sloan, of South Ayrshire, denounced the changes and the Prime Minister, too, a man, he said, who was again assuming the role of Jonah that had dogged him through his political career. The appointment of Stafford Cripps was a vital blunder in strategy. It was a change that would very quickly debunk the amazing theory that the Prime Minister was indispensable. "Let somebody," he counselled, "who can pierce the armour of the Prime Minister and gain his confidence, tell him that his stock has slumped badly and that the time has gone when he can blame everybody in the Cabinet but himself. His star is in the descendant. It has not as yet perhaps assumed the velocity of Lucifer, when he fell from Heaven, but the descent will grow in speed and he will end up with a sorry splash."

Mr. Stokes, the director, held the opinion that musical chairs in Downing Street was not enough unless accompanied by a change in policy and outlook. The strategical control of the war should be changed ; the Minister of Defence was a strategical Jonah.

Major Vyvyan Adams took the contrary view. The war would not be won by periodic explosions against the Prime Minister. No one was indispensable, least of all in a democracy, but Winston Churchill was as nearly irreplaceable as any man had ever been. "Whereas," said the Major, "it was a duty to displace his predecessor—let us be frank at a period of crisis such as to-day—our present leader is to the Allies the epitome of British determination. He is a terror to our enemies. It is a crime to weaken the authority of the Prime Minister. Much of the criticism that has been audible

has come from the extreme right of political opinion. The result is that we now have as Leader of the House a right hon. and learned gentleman who was once too far left for the Labour Party. I hope that any Chamberlainites who still survive are pleased and gratified with their handiwork. This appointment is one of the Prime Minister's finer strokes of genius."

A. V. Hill, learned representative of Cambridge University, committed himself to the opinion that the bombing of Germany was a mistake. Everyone knew who did arithmetic that the idea of doing substantial damage to an enemy by bombing was an illusion. The disaster of this policy was not only that it was futile but it was extremely wasteful. It would become increasingly wasteful as time went on. Having given this example of the results of the processes of elementary arithmetic, the professor pleaded for the greater employment of men of science in the war effort.

Commander King-Hall, who submitted an eleven-point programme of things to be done great and small, spoke of peril from inventors. Nothing so bad had happened in this war as in the last. Then a certain gentleman extracted £5,000 from the Admiralty while endeavouring to train two sea lions to track submarines in the Solent. The idea was that they should have been fitted as submarine trackers with floats on their nether parts.

Lt.-Col. Rayner appealed for more full-blooded patriotism. We were ill equipped on the moral front in some ways because, after four years in which heroism held the headlines in the last war, it became the fashion to debunk heroes. Various writers, who had taken a certain amount of trouble to leave the fighting to their less clever brethren, got busy and vied with each other in decrying those virtues which not only won wars but were needed to make a success of peace.

Major Sir George Davies who "happened to be born eight miles from Pearl Harbour" declared that we must not be distracted by events in the Far East from the main consideration—the defence of our island home and the operations in North Africa. If we had to admit that we were not strong enough to fall on the concentrated strength of Japan in addition to our other liabilities, then for the time being "we must take our medicine."

So the debate ranged far and wide.

In his reply as leader of the House, Stafford Cripps defined his own position as that of Parliamentary liaison officer—to interpret the views of the House to the War Cabinet and of the War Cabinet in the reverse direction. The House of Commons had a vital and all-important part to play in the achievement of victory. Deficiencies must no more be tolerated in the democratic than in the military machine. The methods and mentality of the House must be adapted to the urgent needs of the time.

## CHAPTER IV

*India and Strategy*

RECONSTRUCTION of the Government brought about some easing of the tension at Westminster, but the spirit of discontent was abroad. Sniping at the Government continued and so did the anti-Winston whisperings. In the constituencies by-elections began to run against the Government. It was the day of the Independent candidate who, it appeared, for a space, had only to proclaim his support of Winston and clamour for a more vigorous prosecution of the war than Winston's Ministry was producing, to be assured of a seat at Westminster.

The nation's mood had changed since 1940. Then, when we stood alone, there was elation as well as determination. In 1942 the determination remained but the elation had passed. Confidence in victory was undiminished, but reverses had purged us of the last lingering spark of complacency. Instead, there was a humbleness and a readiness, almost an eagerness for sacrifice. There was a questioning of the continuance of petty luxuries—petrol for pleasure motoring (the basic ration had not then been abolished), taxis to take bookmakers to the races, even cosmetics for women. William Beveridge deplored the continuance of the profit motive and called for a renewal of the spirit of Cromwell's men—"making not money but that which they took for the public felicity to be their end." The moral fervour of a Cromwell would have recreated Puritan England in the spring of 1942.

National feelings found their expression in the speeches of Stafford Cripps, the austere. Calling for a greater urgency in the war effort he recommended greater austerity in the nation's life. Cut out, he urged, ostentatious indulgence, cut out the sporting crowds, speed up output. We could afford neither business as usual, nor pleasure as usual. The Lord Privy Seal was the man of the moment, the greatest single political force in the country after the Prime Minister.

Tadpole and Taper were quick to note the possibilities on the emergence of this new figure. Had Cripps been pleased to encourage the political malcontents he might have been carried far on the currents of intrigue. The whisperings took a new turn. If, muttered the whisperers, Winston should go, here at last was a man to fill the vacancy. If Winston should go—and no man was indispensable. If Winston should go—and, after all, he had served his turn: certainly he did good service in rallying the nation when Britain stood alone, but that service had been rendered and it gave

him no title to remain. And, should he go, then the Lord Privy Seal was available to fill his place. Thus the whisperers.

Tadpole and Taper miscalculated when they looked in the direction of the Lord Privy Seal. They could not fathom the character of the man, the integrity of the man, the independence of the man who had been too independent for the Socialists to contain within their Party. Sir Stafford, like Winston Churchill, cared for none of these things. Prime Minister and Lord Privy Seal, indeed, were at that time agreeing upon the mission to India which Stafford Cripps, with patriotic courage and a contemptuous disregard for personal and political considerations, volunteered to undertake.

The position of India was now an anxious preoccupation for the War Cabinet. With the advance of Japanese forces, India's eastern frontier was threatened and were the invaders to cross from the outposts in Burma, none could foresee the political consequences in India. What lead would Gandhi and the Congress Party give to India's millions whom Tojo was inviting to join the so-called New Order in the Far East? The Congress Party had hitherto withheld co-operation in the war effort because of the denial of independent status for India. A united India, solidly backing the forces organized in her defence, was never more urgently required. The War Cabinet resolved to make an attempt to reach an understanding with Congress. Time was pressing. The difficulties could not be exaggerated. Congress leaders were not favourably disposed towards British ministers, least of all to Winston Churchill, leader of the campaign against the India Bill of the Thirties. It was in these circumstances that Stafford Cripps volunteered to undertake the task of negotiation on behalf of the War Cabinet.

On March 7th Rangoon fell. Four days later the Prime Minister announced that the Lord Privy Seal was to go to India immediately with the British Government's plan. Travelling by air, Cripps reached New Delhi on March 23rd and at once got into touch with the Indian political leaders. Hopes ran high. Cripps was known to be a sincere supporter of Indian aspirations. The first world war had ended with a settlement in Ireland. Would the second see a solution of the problem of India? From Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, on a recent visit to their country, Indians had received an urgent appeal to exert themselves in the cause of freedom side by side with their brethren in China.

The War Cabinet's plan was for the creation of a self-governing Dominion of India immediately upon the ending of the war. The future constitution would be evolved by a specially appointed body elected by the Indians themselves on the principle of proportional representation. The British Government would by treaty with the constitution-making body provide for the complete transfer of

responsibility from British to Indian hands. Provinces of British India would have the right to contract out of the new Dominion and retain their existing status. Such were the provisions for conferring self-government when hostilities ended. For the remaining period of the war the British Declaration provided :

"During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be formed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, naval and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian peoples in the councils of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India."

It was this concluding passage of the declaration which formed the chief subject of the discussions. The Congress leaders were not concerned over self-government at some date in the future : that had been pledged in 1940. The immediate present was their preoccupation. Were the Indian leaders to enter the Viceroy's Council, would they have the responsibility and powers of Ministers ? And, if that were accorded, then would an Indian Minister of Defence have authority over the war machine in India and the Commander-in-Chief ? The negotiators of the Congress Working Committee were by no means satisfied with the assurances they received on these points. Nevertheless, they came near to acceptance of the British plan. Then, at the eleventh hour, when a successful outcome of the negotiations seemed to be assured, the Congress Working Committee rejected the British declaration. This decision was due to the intervention of Gandhi. The Committee had by resolution agreed to accept the proposals, but Gandhi, from afar, pronounced otherwise. The decision was thereupon reversed.

Negotiation is difficult against non-co-operation and no-compromise. To have granted Gandhi's demands as voiced by Congress would have brought chaos to India. "This," said the Lord Privy Seal at a later date, "was stated by Gandhi himself. Quite recently he had said 'Anarchy is the only way. Someone asked me if there would be anarchy after British rule. Yes, it will be there but I tell the British to give us chaos.' The action which Gandhi was threatening was calculated to endanger the Allied war effort and to bring the greatest aid and comfort to our common enemies. Mr. Gandhi was not prepared to wait. He would rather jeopardize freedom and the whole cause of the United Nations. He threatened

the extremes of pressure in this most difficult hour to win political power for his own party. The Indian people as a whole did not support this attitude."

It was a melancholy ending. Even the flicker of goodwill in Congress circles faded. Non-co-operation degenerated into civil disobedience when the British Government declined Gandhi's invitation to walk out of India which then, on the Mahatma's advice, would have offered passive resistance to Japanese invaders. By the end of the summer the situation was such that for the preservation of order Gandhi and Congress leaders were arrested and interned.

In his final message to the people of India before leaving for home, Stafford Cripps had lamented the critical and unconstructive attitude which he had met—"natural enough for the law courts or the market place." He could feel, in common with the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet and the people at home, that all that could be done had been done. Winston, in a message of appreciation of the Lord Privy Seal's tenacity and perseverance, remarked : "Even though your hopes have not been fulfilled, you have rendered a very important service to the common cause, and the foundations have been laid for the future progress of the Indian people."

When the Congress leaders were interned Winston made a statement to the House of Commons on the Government's policy. In point of time it comes at a later date (September 10th) than the events with which this chapter is otherwise concerned, but it is more convenient to include it here and complete the record. His main purpose was to reassure Indian opinion that the British offer held good despite the failure of the Cripps Mission. He was also concerned to state the Government case in answer to American critics of British imperialism.

The broad principles of the British Government's declaration, he said, which formed the basis of the mission of the Lord Privy Seal, must be taken as representing the settled policy of the British Crown and Parliament.

"These principles stand in their full scope and integrity. No one can add anything to them, and no one can take anything away. The good offices of the Lord Privy Seal were rejected by the Indian Congress Party. This, however, does not end the matter. The Indian Congress Party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organization built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests.

"Outside that Party and fundamentally opposed to it are the 90,000,000 Moslems in British India who have their rights of self-expression ; the 50,000,000 Depressed Classes, or the Untouch-

ables as they are called because they are supposed to defile their Hindu co-religionists by their presence or by their shadow ; and the 95,000,000 subjects of the Princes of India with whom we are bound by treaties ; in all 235,000,000 in these three large groupings alone, out of about 390,000,000 in all India. This takes no account of large elements among the Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in British India who deplore the present policy of the Congress Party. It is necessary that these main facts should not be overlooked here or abroad, because no comprehension of the Indian problem or of the relations between Britain and India is possible without the recognition of these basic data.

"The Congress Party has now abandoned in many respects the policy of non-violence which Mr. Gandhi has so long inculcated in theory, and has come into the open as a revolutionary movement designed to paralyse the communications by rail and telegraph and generally to promote disorder, the looting of shops and sporadic attacks upon the Indian police, accompanied from time to time by revolting atrocities—the whole having the intention or at any rate the effect of hampering the defence of India against the Japanese invaders who stand on the frontiers of Assam and also upon the eastern side of the Bay of Bengal. It may well be that these activities of the Congress Party have been aided by Japanese fifth-column work on a widely-extended scale and with special direction to strategic points. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the communications of the Indian forces defending Bengal on the Assam frontier have been specially attacked.

"In these circumstances the Viceroy and Government of India, with the unanimous support of the Viceroy's Council, the great majority of which are Indians, patriotic and wise men, have felt it necessary to proclaim and suppress the central and provincial organs of this association which has become committed to hostile and criminal courses. Mr. Gandhi and other principal leaders have been interned under conditions of the highest comfort and consideration, and will be kept out of harm's way till the troubles subside. It is fortunate, indeed, that the Congress Party has no influence whatever with the martial races, on whom the defence of India, apart from British forces, largely depends. Many of these races are divided by unbridgeable religious gulf s from the Hindu Congress, and would never consent to be ruled by them. Nor shall they ever be against their will so subjugated.

"There is no compulsory service in India, but upwards of a million Indians have volunteered to serve the cause of the United Nations in this world struggle. The bravery of the Indian troops has been distinguished in many theatres of war, and it is satisfactory to note that in these last two months, when the Congress has been measuring its strength against the Government of India, more than

140,000 new volunteers for the army have come forward in loyal allegiance to the King-Emperor, thus surpassing all records, in order to defend their native land. So far as matters have gone up to the present, they have revealed the impotence of the Congress Party either to seduce or even sway the Indian Army, to draw from their duty the enormous body of Indian officials, or still less to stir the vast Indian masses."

While the guns were firing in the spring of 1942 on the war fronts of the world, political sharp-shooters at home continued to indulge their taste for sniping at the Government. The central direction of the war was now their concern. When the constitution of the Cabinet had been under attack, the technique of criticism had been to applaud the captain and to assail the team. Now the method was changed—the captain had too great a burden upon his shoulders, therefore he should divest himself of some of his responsibilities. Two arguments were advanced—that the post of Defence Minister should be divorced from that of Prime Minister and the Prime Minister should no longer preside over the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

It might be suspected that the critics had been turning up their histories of the last war to find inspiration for this line of attack on the Prime Minister. It was on this very issue that Asquith fell from power in 1916. There had been acute dissatisfaction over the manner in which the War Committee had been functioning. Lloyd George finally presented Asquith with the demand that the conduct of the war should be assigned to a Committee of three, including L. G. himself, but excluding the Prime Minister, who would have been left with the titular role, while Lloyd George had the power and responsibility. Asquith declined to agree and as the result lost power and title.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Chatfield, former First Sea Lord and Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence 1939-40, had focused attention on the constitutional responsibilities of the Minister of Defence and had thereby provided the critics with a target for their attacks in the Prime Minister's alleged irresponsibility. Addressing the Peers Chatfield said that when he became Minister for Defence Co-ordination under Neville Chamberlain, he had quickly found that his job was a sinecure. In that Cabinet were the three Service Ministers who would attend accompanied by their Chiefs of Staff. He was the fifth wheel of the coach and eventually the Prime Minister dispensed with his services. In June 1940 a Cabinet change of great importance was made when Mr. Churchill, on taking office, became Minister of Defence and Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff

<sup>1</sup> An authoritative record of the intrigue which resulted in Asquith's fall is to be found in Lord Beaverbrook's account of events, derived from Bonar Law, in *Politicians and the War*.

Committee. Mr. Churchill removed the Service Ministers from the War Cabinet. That meant that the Prime Minister could have the most deep, technical consultations on strategy with the Chiefs of Staff and Service Ministers outside the Cabinet and then go to the War Cabinet with his determined mind made up. He would become not only the advocate of his own decisions but, as Prime Minister, the final arbiter on whether a decision was to be agreed to or not. How could they expect others in the Cabinet, not equipped with strategical knowledge or long experience, to criticize what was recommended by the powerful advocacy of that wonderful man? Julius Caesar at his best and Napoleon could never have attempted to run a war of such magnitude, to conduct Armies, Navies and Air Force as well. It was impossible for one individual to hold these gigantic strings of war over the whole world and over all the oceans and be able to give, daily, great decisions in the Cabinet. There should be a separate Defence Minister who should hold the exact duties as regarded defence as those held by the Prime Minister.

The case for the establishment of what its supporters termed a Great (or Combined) General Staff was argued by Sir Edward Grigg (later Lord Altringham), former Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the War Office and later Minister in the Middle East. He argued that the fall of Singapore had shown "once again" that the action of the three Services had clearly not been combined in a single plan. The elaborate machinery of the Chiefs of Staff, with their daily consultations, was not producing the balanced strategy or co-ordination of strength by sea, land and in the air which the exacting tasks ahead demanded. A Combined General Staff should be set up and it should not be presided over by the Prime Minister.

As a means of removing misapprehensions about the functions of the Chiefs of Staffs and of his own part in the planning of war strategy the Prime Minister caused a White Paper to be issued on "The organization for Joint Planning." It repeated the information he had given to the House in the recent debate<sup>1</sup> and enlarged upon it.

After the White Paper came the debates from which it emerged that the misapprehensions had not been removed from some minds; or alternatively that the White Paper had furnished new ammunition for the critics.

The Peers led the way. Lord Denman initiated a debate calling for the setting up of a High Command which could "plan the war as a whole." Viscount Swinton (later Minister resident in West Africa and subsequently Civil Aviation Minister) supported the setting up of a Great General Staff. Lord Addison considered the White Paper arrangements to be "cumbersome and complicated." Lord Hankey's opinion was that the chief weakness in the War Cabinet's machinery was over-centralization at the top.

<sup>1</sup> See page 384

The former C.I.G.S., Lord Milne, wanted a permanent head of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, either soldier or civilian, without political bias. Lord Winster roundly criticized Mr. Churchill's interference in the conduct of the war, claiming that repeated disasters proved not that the machinery for conducting affairs was wrong but that the Prime Minister's strategical ideas involved fighting superior forces everywhere in turn—and that was a very considerable discovery for any peer to make.

A few days later the Commons gave their opinions. At the opening of the debate, the Deputy Prime Minister sought to dispel a misapprehension or two. He repudiated the idea that everything was done by one man and that Cabinet Ministers sat around listening to this one man's views. It was erroneous to imagine that the Chiefs of Staff were unable to give an opinion differing from that of the Prime Minister—they were not tongue-tied. Attlee further protested against the suggestion that there was all the time some frightful contest going on between the Government—the Prime Minister in particular—and their military advisers. "This simply is not true; it is a hangover of 1914–18 and does not happen now."

Edward Grigg pressed urgently for an inquiry into Singapore and asserted that the Government must bear the responsibility for grave miscalculation.

Oliver Stanley said bluntly that the agitation with regard to changes in planning machinery was in fact an attack on the Prime Minister.

Clement Davies found objection to the Minister of Defence because he was responsible to nobody.

Wardlaw-Milne said the Government was a one-man affair and one man could not carry the burden. He wanted an inquiry into Singapore, also into the despatch of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* without air protection.

Mr. Stokes, the director, thought the war would be lost unless there were a change in strategical control. Commander Bower enriched the debate with the suggestion that an inquiry might establish that Singapore had been lost upon the playing fields of Harrow.

When Stafford Cripps intimated that Winston could not be present to reply to the debate there were protests. The Minister of Defence, it was represented, should be there to answer criticisms of the Department of Defence.

Hore Belisha came forth as the champion of oppressed or depressed Ministers. The three Service Ministers, he asserted, had been diminished in status and dignity. The first reform should be either to allow these Ministers to discharge their constitutional responsibilities or to reduce them to the status of under-secretaries. Almost undetected, the Prime Minister had introduced modifications

in the procedure over the Chiefs of Staff. Lord Chatfield had been displaced as member for Defence Co-ordination on the ground that the post was redundant and later Mr. Churchill (then First Lord) was authorized by the Cabinet to give guidance and direction to the Chiefs of Staff Committee "That is," said Hore-Belisha, "the military service-men were to be guided and directed by a political minister. This took place before the disaster of Norway and I do not think you can divorce the almost unbroken sequence of strategical disasters since that time from this mixture of strategic and military elements in the war machine."

So the debate proceeded. Some critics attacked the machinery and some, with less evasion and more courage, the man in charge of the machine.

A. P. Herbert launched out at the critics with the force of a Petty Officer. The speeches in the House had shown signs of spring fever, particularly that of Wardlaw-Milne who had drawn an unbalanced picture and had saddled the Prime Minister with "every reverse in British history except the Battle of Hastings." Against those who had said Singapore, Hong Kong and Rangoon, should also be said Abyssinia, Somaliland, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Irak and Madagascar.

It was noticed that Stafford Cripps, winding up the debate, dropped an interesting hint on the subject of Singapore. Rejecting demands for an inquiry, he said that Australian and Indian as well as British troops fought at Singapore and there was the possibility of some mutual recrimination between the various nationalities which would be disturbing to friendly co-operation.

The full story of the last days at Singapore has yet to be disclosed. When they are made, the disclosures of some of the incidents there may prove far from pleasant reading.

In the House of Lords, Lord Davies asked for an inquiry into Singapore and Lord Addison backed him. Lord Hankey wanted an inquiry into "what happened at the London end."

It is pleasant to turn from Parliamentary fault-finding for a space and to recall the achievements of the Government in the first two years of its existence. Winston set debit and credit in perspective when he broadcast to the people (May 10th, 1942) on his first two years of power. It was a speech marked out from its predecessors by a new note of assertiveness.

With Allied successes in magnificent succession now behind us, Winston's speech may not in retrospect appear to be noteworthy, but that was not how it struck his hearers in 1942. Then we were not flushed by victory—reverses indeed were still our lot. Java had fallen, the Japanese were in New Guinea. The Americans had been all but pushed from the Philippines, and, with the loss of Mandalay, we were nearly out of Burma. On the face of things

there seemed no cause for the national spirits to rise. Nevertheless from that May Day broadcast and Winston's words of robust cheer, we appreciated that there were blessings to be counted.

Winston recalled the perils which Government and people had faced and survived. He expressed his pride that he had been privileged to be the orator of freemen—"It fell to me in those days to express the sentiments and resolves of the British nation in that supreme crisis of its life ; that was to me an honour far beyond any dreams or ambitions I had ever nursed and it is one that cannot be taken away." All the world, even our best friends thought that the end had come and we, united in that majestic hour, prepared to conquer or perish. Then it was that the tyrant made a fatal blunder for dictators as well as democracies and Parliamentary Governments (Winston evidently relished the dry humour of the passage) made mistakes sometimes. "Indeed, when the whole story is told I believe it will be found that the dictators, for all their preparations and prolonged scheming, have made greater mistakes than the democracies they have assaulted. Even Hitler makes mistakes sometimes." His first mistake was the invasion of Russia.

Then Hitler made his second grand blunder—he forgot about the winter. "There is a winter, you know, in Russia. For a good many months the temperature is apt to fall very low. There is snow, there is frost and all that. Hitler forgot about this Russian winter. He must have been very loosely educated. I have never made such a bad mistake as that." No one could say how many ill-clad Germans perished in Russia and its snows and the valiant Russian counter-attacks. Certainly more perished than were killed in the whole four and a quarter years of the last war—a statement that sent many to the history books to find that the total German losses from 1914-18 were two million killed and four million wounded.

Winston passed to the toll that the R.A.F. were inflicting on the Germans. The raids were still on a modest scale compared with the blows that were to come (the first 1,000-bomber raid on Cologne in that month of May taxed the capacity of Bomber Command) but they were mounting in strength—a form of warfare which, as the Prime Minister put it, should, according to the German view, be the strict monopoly of the Herrenvolk. In September 1940, Hitler had boasted that he would "rub out" British towns and villages. Now the boot was on the other foot and Hitler had even called in question the humanity of these grim developments of war. It was a pity that his conversion had not taken place before he bombed Warsaw, or massacred 20,000 Dutch folk in defenceless Rotterdam or wreaked his cruel vengeance on the open city of Belgrade. Now it was the other way round. The accuracy of our bombing had nearly doubled and "with continued practice" it might be expected to improve still further.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly yet they grind exceeding small. And for my part I hail it as an example of sublime and poetic justice that those who have loosed these horrors upon mankind will now in their homes and persons feel the shattering strokes of just retribution" The civil population of Germany had an easy way to escape from these severities. All they needed to do was to leave the cities where munitions work was being carried on—abandon their work, go out into the fields and watch their home fires burning from a distance. "In this way," suggested Winston grimly, "they may find time for meditation and repentance. There, they may remember the millions of Russian women and children they have driven out to perish in the snows, and the mass executions of peasantry and prisoners of war which on varying scales they are inflicting upon so many of the ancient and famous peoples of Europe."

The Prime Minister warned the Germans against resorting to the use of poison gas as they had done in the first world war. The Soviet Government had expressed the view that the Germans, in their desperation, might employ gas against the armies and people of Russia "We ourselves," Winston said, "are firmly resolved not to use this odious weapon unless it is first used by the Germans. Knowing our Hun, however, we have not neglected to make preparations on a formidable scale. I wish to make it plain that we shall treat the unprovoked use of poison gas against our Russian Ally exactly as if it were used against ourselves. If we are satisfied that this new outrage has been committed by Hitler we shall use our great and growing air superiority in the West to carry gas warfare on the largest possible scale far and wide against military objectives in Germany. It is thus for Hitler to choose whether he wishes to add this additional horror to warfare."

## CHAPTER V

### *Censure Motion*

MIDSUMMER brought new reverses in the field and a new turmoil at Westminster. Winston, on the breaking of the storm, was in Washington. When he had left for the United States on June 17th, the prospects seemed reasonably fair. A few days later the Allied Army in the Western Desert had been forced back from Libya to the frontiers of Egypt.

On June 20th, Tobruk fell to the enemy, with the loss of 25,000 prisoners and much stores of war. On June 23rd, Wardlaw-Milne

gave notice in the House of Commons of a motion of censure on the Government.

It was the first time that the critics had nerv'd themselves to make a direct challenge to Winston's leadership. The tabling of the motion caused no great stir at home. Nowhere was it imagined that the fate of the Government would be in the balance. There was more concern over events on the battlefield than with manœuvrings of politicians in the House. At Westminster speculation was concerned rather with the reactions of the critics than with the effect on the Ministry. How many of those who had been campaigning in the background would brave the open and the division lobbies?

A broad there was a less shrewd appreciation of the political consequences of Wardlaw-Milne and his motion. The American press whipped up a fine crisis for the delectation of their readers. Winston, in Washington, learned from headlines of the blackest type that his Administration was in peril.

The reverse in Africa which caused this political diversion was the final success that fell to Rommel before the German war machine began to go into reverse.

The fortunes of battle in North Africa had varied in disconcerting extremes. In the winter of 1941 Auchinleck and Ritchie, flushed with initial victory, were driving westwards across the desert sands. Tobruk was relieved. The advance was carried from Sollum to El Agheila. It looked as if the Germans were to be driven out of Africa. Next Rommel struck back and regained two-thirds of the sands he had forfeited. In the spring of 1942 thrust followed counter-thrust indecisively. Then came the battles of Gazala, Knightsbridge and Acroma. The 30th Armoured Corps lost 230 out of its 300 medium tanks and Rommel had gained the upper hand. In a few days the African scene had been transformed. The enemy were menacing Egypt.

While public attention had been focused on the ebb and flow of the Battle of the Desert and the eastward flow of the Nazis into the Caucasus, discussions had been proceeding between the western Allies for the launching of a combined offensive. In May high-ranking officers of the United States forces visited London. They included one officer whose name scarcely made news at that date—Dwight D. Eisenhower, Major-General at the head of the Operations Division of the United States General Staff. It was in furtherance of the plans discussed in London that Winston, in June, crossed the Atlantic.

It was some months before the world learned of the operations that were then being evolved. For the most part the military secrets of the war were scrupulously well kept, despite the vast circle that necessarily had to be privy to them. It would have needed acumen of more than human keenness to have deduced the

landing in Africa of the ensuing autumn from the guarded phrases of the official statement on the object of the conferences—"to bring the earliest maximum concentration of Allied war power to bear upon the enemy." While these plans could not be disclosed, it was said that "the coming operations, discussed in detail, will divert German strength from the attack on Russia." During the visit Litvinof, Russian Ambassador to Washington, held extended conferences with Premier and President.

Crossing the Atlantic in the flying-boat *Bristol*, Winston was back in London on June 27th. On the 30th he made a brief appearance in the House to announce that five days previously General Auchinleck had personally assumed command of the Eighth Army, taking over from General Ritchie.

On the first day of July the House of Commons met for a two days' debate on the Wardlaw-Milne censure motion. At the time the main armoured forces, British and German, were known to be engaged to the west of El Alamein in the preliminary encounters of the battle of Egypt. Auchinleck was holding the last effective line to the west of the Nile Delta and Alexandria was no more than 65 miles distant from the battle front.

Before the debate began, Commander King-Hall rose to ask Wardlaw-Milne to defer his motion until the battle had been concluded. It was a suggestion that found favour in all quarters of the House, where the extreme step of the tabling of a censure resolution at such a time was generally regretted.

Wardlaw-Milne replied that had the Government suggested the postponement of the debate on the ground of national interest, he would immediately have acquiesced. No such suggestion had been made.

The Prime Minister, however, would have no delay. "I have carefully considered this matter," he said, "and I have no doubt that if an appeal were made on the grounds of urgency and seriousness of the situation, the debate would be postponed. But, after all, this vote of censure has been on the Order Paper for some time. When I was in the United States I can testify to the lively excitement which was created by its appearance. Although we in this country may have our own knowledge of the stability of our institutions and of the strength of the Government of the day, yet that is by no means the opinion that is shared or felt in other countries. Now that this has gone so far and this matter has been for more than a week the subject of comment in every part of the world, it would be, in my opinion, even more injurious to delay a decision than to go forward with the issue."

So the debate proceeded. It was apparent that the Prime Minister was in a fighting mood and that the Government welcomed the challenge. An out and out censure had its advantages

in comparison with the covert criticisms of the past months from candid and professing friends. The motion was to the following effect :

"That the House, while paying tribute to the heroism and endurance of the Forces of the Crown in circumstances of exceptional difficulty, has no confidence in the central direction of the war"

On this occasion the critics had first say, the Prime Minister reserving his statement to the close of the debate.

There was a full House when Wardlaw-Milne launched the attack. He began, defensively, by answering the critics of his action—that he had chosen the time badly for giving notice of his motion. On the contrary, he claimed, he had given the Government the longest possible notice and by so doing had afforded the Government Whips every possible opportunity in which to make their influence felt. To their work in the past week he paid tribute and added, "It would be interesting, if time permitted, to deal with the extraordinary exhibition of human nature with which I have been treated during the past seven days. I realize how true it is that the 'tinker out of Bedford' was 'not of an age but for all time.' I have seen Mr. Steadfast and Mr. Valiant for Truth, but how often have I also seen Mr. Timorous and Mr. Pliable. They are all represented in this House." It had been argued that the Motion of Censure was unnecessary and that a deputation should have gone to the Prime Minister to hold a pistol to his head. Deputations to Ministers during two years had achieved nothing.

A vital mistake had been made in allowing Mr. Churchill to combine the office of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. Until recently, production had suffered for the want of a single head, and from the lack of direction which would be obtained from a Minister of Defence apart from the Prime Minister in charge of the Armed Forces. Here Wardlaw-Milne suggested that the Duke of Gloucester should be appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British Army. He next quoted from what he termed repeatedly optimistic statements by the Prime Minister on the progress of our operations and commented, "We had almost got to the stage when if my rt. hon friend comes down to the House to tell us that we are going to win or makes an optimistic statement elsewhere, one becomes almost afraid of what we shall hear next." As to the causes of the setback in Libya, why did the German Mark IV tank so outclass our own tanks to so great an extent and why were enemy tanks fitted with more powerful guns? This country knew all about the Mark IV tank before Dunkirk and the German 88 mm. gun was in use in the Spanish Civil War. Who gave the decision first to hold Tobruk and who ordered its capitulation? The House by the division must decide either to be a packed assembly,

merely to receive in humble silence Government statements in many cases quite inaccurate, or it must assert itself in determination to put things right without fear or favour.

Roger Keyes, Admiral of the Fleet and formerly for 15 months Director of Combined Operations, then sailed in to the attack, but when he had been under weigh for some time, the House was in doubt as to his objective—the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's critics. From his knowledge of the conduct of affairs he said, "The story that the Prime Minister rides rough-shod over his Service advisers and takes the whole direction of the war into his own hands—which appears to be believed by many—is simply not true. It is true, of course, that he is masterful, dislikes criticism and like every great man who is confident in his own judgment, prefers people who agree with him, but I assure the House that he could never be induced to override the advice of the Chief of Staffs Committee, or to undertake any enterprise unless they were prepared to share fully with him in the responsibility. It is hard that three times in the Prime Minister's career he should have been thwarted—in Gallipoli, in Norway and in the Mediterranean—in carrying out strategical strokes which might have altered the whole course of two wars because, each time, his constitutional naval adviser declined to share the responsibility with him if it entailed any risk."

Confused, as he said, at the course the debate was taking, an hon. member sought enlightenment. He understood that the vote of censure was moved on the ground that the Prime Minister had interfered unduly with the direction of the war. The seconder seemed to be seconding because the Prime Minister had not interfered sufficiently.

Sir Roger : "I do not think that the mover ever suggested that the Prime Minister had unduly interfered with the naval direction of the war (Interruption.) Well, if so, I submit I have dispelled the suggestion. We look to the Prime Minister to put his house in order and rally the country once again to its task."

Mr. Tinker : "If the motion is carried the Prime Minister has to go ; but that gallant member is appealing to us to keep the Prime Minister there."

Sir Roger : "It would be a deplorable disaster if the Prime Minister had to go." He argued that the Government contained Ministers who had neither the courage to rule nor the ability to lead—a Home Secretary who had been a conscientious objector in the last war ; a Minister of Labour who, although a successful strike leader, could not stop wartime strikes ; and a First Lord of the Admiralty who had been responsible for our naval disarmament.

Thereafter Oliver Lyttelton spoke for the Government. The substance of his argument was elaborated by Winston in the final speech. Lyttelton made one disclosure of the peril in which these

islands stood after the fall of France. After the disaster of Dunkirk, he stated, we had in Britain only 200 light tanks and 50 infantry tanks.

The debate again followed a discursive course. Most of the supporters of the censure motion rose to explain their reasons. Others would not go so far as to support the motion—neither would they vote for the Government.

Herbert Williams declared that none of those associated with the motion had any malice against the Prime Minister, whom he thus described : “He is a great national figure and has been so for many years. He is attractive in personal relationships, kindly, a man of the happiest family life, all the qualities one admires in a good Englishman and a capacity for speech so amazing that when people have listened to him they do not think there is any need to do anything themselves. This capacity for speech is a dangerous weapon. The pen is mightier than the sword and the voice mightier than either. Hitler has created his power by his facility for speech but he delegates authority to other people, a capacity for the delegation of authority that the Prime Minister will not adopt. We want that delegation of authority. Until we get it these troubles will go on”

Flight-Lieut. Boothby thought there was no reason for the House or the country to lose spirits over a tactical reverse in North Africa. The British Empire had not been created by men who were miserable and melancholy but by men who were merry. There were limits to the value of purposeless austerity. Rather say with “the greatest modern poet,” A. E. Housman :

*The troubles of our proud and angry dust  
Are from eternity and shall not fail  
Bear them we can; and if we can we must.  
Shoulder the sky, my lad, and drink your ale.*

Earl Winterton argued the question of ministerial responsibility. They were told when things went wrong not to blame the Prime Minister, which was getting close to the moral position of the German people—“the Fuehrer is always right” In normal times, what happened in high places ? “It may be an Admiral, it may be a General, it may be a Prime Minister, himself. He may be an excellent man but if the results are bad it is he who is held responsible constitutionally for those results. The Admiral or General is removed by Cabinet Minister, the Cabinet Minister by the Prime Minister, or the Prime Minister by the vote of this House. I therefore ask the House : Are you prepared, if these disasters continue, whatever happens to say that right up to the end of the war, however long it lasts, we must never have another Defence Minister or Prime Minister, that he is the only man who

can win the war? I hope that is not the attitude. . . . If this series of disasters goes on, the right hon. gentleman, by one of the greatest acts of self-abnegation which any man could carry out, should go to his colleagues—and there is more than one suitable man for Prime Minister on the Treasury Bench now—and suggest that one of them should form a Government and that the right hon. gentleman would take office under him. He might do so perhaps as Foreign Secretary because his management of our relations with Russia and the United States has been perfect."

Col. Colville suggested that the fall of the Churchill Government would be a greater victory for Hitler than the capture of any of the objectives he was at present attacking.

Major Gluckstein had no liking for the second eleven which he saw in the offing, the shadow Cabinet that had obtruded itself. He preferred the existing administration to what he saw lurking in ambush. It was unlikely that Charles would be dethroned to make James king.

Communism's representative combined ardent defence of the Prime Minister with an attack on those who sought to weaken the Anglo-Russian Alliance. The mover of the censure motion, William Gallacher said, had for a considerable time tried to create the impression of supporting the Prime Minister while, in the most cunning manner, he had sought to knock away the props from beneath him. The blow at our defences in Libya was a terrible blow at the poise of the hon. member for Kidderminster, who, in a moment of panic, had exposed himself to the House and the country not as a friend but as an enemy of the Prime Minister. Behind the tatterdemalion group associated with Wardlaw-Milne, not of it, but encouraging it, were dangerous and sinister forces. They were the open friends of Hitler before the war. What was their aim? "Listen to the whispering campaign that is going on around these lobbies, outside in Fleet Street and in every part of the country. . . . It is the Prime Minister who is being attacked, not the generals in the field, not the men in the Army, not the members on the Front Bench. It is a political attack directed against the Prime Minister. What has been his greatest offence? At a critical moment he stood forth as a great statesman and linked the fate of this country with that of the Soviet Union. . . . Behind this campaign against the Prime Minister is the desire to prevent a second front in Europe, and an attempt to weaken our alliance with the Soviet Union."

Hely Hutchinson pronounced a general confession for the House. While there was dissatisfaction over the output of the right sort of tank, he would not agree that the central direction of the war was responsible because of the time involved. "If a thing is wrong now, it is due to a decision or a failure to take a decision as much as three or five years ago. I find great difficulty in believing that the

Prime Minister, who all those years before the war foresaw our chiefest need, is now the man I am not to trust in the central direction of the war. . . . I feel much more inclined to lay at my own door a mistake which I made with my vote in the 10 or 15 years preceding the war at a time when such money as I earned I preferred to spend upon myself. I preferred to maintain freedom of business, freedom of contract I preferred to give my vote to or to be taken in by demands for collective security. I preferred to vote for social security, anything rather than that form of security which alone could give real security—the building of guns and tanks and ships and aeroplanes and the training of soldiers. All that was my fault for a long time. I share in that responsibility. What was the Prime Minister doing all the time I was doing those foolish things with my vote? He was telling me to build guns and ships and tanks and aeroplanes and to train soldiers and sailors and airmen."

Clement Davies reminded the House once again of the grim record of reverses—Norway, Dunkirk, Greece, Crete, North Africa, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and Burma. How long would it be before the facts came home to the people in the House? If there was a man in the country who, on a two years' record of that kind, could say, "I have complete confidence in that Government," then he was sorry for him.

James McGovern suggested that the Government were living in a fool's paradise. It would not last a week were not the Labour Trade Union members in the Cabinet. As to the Prime Minister he had great capabilities as an orator, and because of this a false assessment had been made of his other abilities. "From my experience he is the most arrogant and intolerable Member of this House. . . . So far as I am concerned, if I had to choose between Hitler and the Prime Minister, I should not know exactly on which the choice had to fall. . . . I know public opinion There is going to be a first-class political upheaval in this country. I make this prophecy—the Government cannot last another six months."

Dr. Haden Guest argued that the no-confidence motion had rendered good service by bringing the House back to the realities of parliamentary government The central direction of the war should revert to the House of Commons from which it had been too long away. We had been in great danger of sliding into the condition of a totalitarian assembly.

As one of the original signatories and drafters of the motion, Commander Bower deplored the attitude of those who had represented that there was something wrong in putting forward in a proper constitutional manner a vote of censure on a Government. Some members—not only the "new boys" but experienced members—had said that speakers must be careful in their statements—"What will America think, what will China think, what will the Cham of

Tartary think and all the rest of it?" Had they any reason to go cap in hand to America or anybody else? For Heaven's sake let them drop this inferiority complex and realize that we, the Mother of Parliaments, invented democracy. He complained that the Prime Minister indulged in an extraordinary game of musical chairs if Parliament became troublesome. Once a certain stage had been reached in the hierarchy people never got the sack. He quoted from Winston's sketch of Lord Oxford and Asquith in "Great Contemporaries";

In affairs Asquith had that ruthless side without which great matters cannot be handled. When offering me Cabinet office in 1908 he repeated to me Mr Gladstone's saying: "The first essential for a Prime Minister is to be a good butcher" and he added "There are several who must be axed now." They were

The Prime Minister, unlike Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Asquith, allowed his friendship for men who had failed him to prevent him from wielding the poleaxe.

When the debate had been in progress for over fifteen hours the House was counted out and the proceedings were adjourned until the morrow. The debate was then resumed by Aneurin Bevan, implacable critic of all ministries. It was, he conceived, his duty to try to reproduce in the House of Commons the psychology existing in the country which was deeply disturbed by events. The country was more concerned that the Prime Minister should win the war than win debates; he had won debate after debate and lost battle after battle. Three things in this Member's opinion were wrong—the main strategy of the war, wrong weapons had been produced and the weapons were being used by men not trained in the use of them, who had not studied modern tactics. The Government had conceived the war wrongly from the very beginning, no one more so than the Prime Minister himself, than whom no man was more Maginot-minded. Chief evidence of the production of wrong weapons was the neglect of the dive-bomber and the failure to equip the Army with transport planes. Absence of the dive-bomber showed that the Prime Minister and his Government had not gone to the heart of modern war-making—"And I say it is disgraceful that the lives of British soldiers should be lost because of the absence of this elementary knowledge at the top." Strategy was wrong because the Prime Minister, although possessing many other qualities, sometimes conceived of the war in mediaeval terms. The Army needed to be purged at the top. Generals of Allied forces now in this country, experienced in the use of modern weapons, should be placed in command of our men in the field. A second front should be opened in Europe: Stalin expected it.

Walter Elliot brought the experience of the last war to bear

upon the question of divorcing the posts of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. That suggestion, he recalled, was one rejected by Asquith, and if it was not good enough for Asquith, did anyone think it would be for the present Prime Minister? Correspondence passed between Asquith and Lloyd George, who had suggested that Asquith should remain Prime Minister with supreme and effective control of war policy although not chairman of the War Committee of the Cabinet. Asquith replied that such an arrangement could not be workable or effective. "My hon. Friend, the member for Kidderminster, maintained his contention that a divorce of this kind could be effected. Yet under much more favourable circumstances a man with admittedly far less experience in war than the present Prime Minister and with a far more judicial frame of mind, in the space of time between a morning and afternoon turned down the solution which has been urged upon the House." It was not only in this country that the two offices were amalgamated. In Russia Stalin had control of the armies. In the United States the President constitutionally was Commander-in-Chief of the Army.

Captain Profumo, as a serving officer, told the House that there was great concern in the Forces about our present situation, but there was far greater concern about the habitual critics "who, after every reverse, like lean and hungry dogs smell around for a bone to pick."

Hore Belisha wound up for the critics in a speech in which his main line of attack was that the Prime Minister had used unjustifiably optimistic phrases in referring to the Allied prospects in the Battle of Libya. Among the Winstonian statements he quoted were :

November 20, in the House—This is the first time British troops have met the Germans at least equally well-armed and well-equipped.

November 20, in a message to the troops—For the first time British and Empire troops will meet the Germans with ample equipment in modern weapons of war.

December 11, in the House—We had a good superiority in the numbers of armoured vehicles

January, at Ottawa—This fighting in Libya proves that when our men have equal weapons in their hands and proper support from the air, they are more than a match for Nazi hordes . . . The German Army is decisively beaten but its power of resistance has not ceased."

Hore Belisha declared that his concern was with the morale of the Army. "If you convince our Army that it has to undertake an offensive with superior or even equal armour, and you prepare for five months to smash German panzer divisions and then that Army is routed utterly, confidence is shaken. You have no right to put the Army in that position. To blame Generals, as you do by inference when you say that your equipment was superior, is ungenerous ;

to blame the Army is unworthy ; to blame your predecessors is contemptible. . . . The Prime Minister had said that we would hold Singapore, that we would hold Crete, that we had smashed the German army in Libya, and had come down to the House to celebrate General Auchinleck's victory in the first phase almost before it had begun—which gave me a shiver down my spine at the time, as it did many other hon. members. When I read that he had said that we are going to hold Egypt, my anxieties became greater than they otherwise would have been. . . . How can one place reliance on judgments that have so repeatedly turned out to be misguided ? That is what the House of Commons has to decide. It is not with over-confidence, not by boasting or arrogance, or rhetoric, that we shall win the war. It is by a humble devotion to our task. That is why my friends have put down this motion. Think what is at stake. In 100 days we lost our Empire in the Far East. What will happen in the next 100 days ?"

The Prime Minister made his defence in one of the longest and most carefully prepared speeches he had addressed to the House. He did not spare some of those who had entered the lists against him.

"This long debate," he began, "has now reached its final stage. What a remarkable example it has been of the unbridled freedom of our Parliamentary institutions in time of war. Everything that could be thought of or raked up has been used—to weaken confidence in the Government : to prove that Ministers are incompetent and to weaken their confidence in themselves . to make the Army distrust the backing it is getting from the civil power : to make the workmen lose confidence in the weapons they are striving so hard to make : to represent the Government as a set of nonentities over whom the Prime Minister towers and then to undermine him in his own heart and if possible before the eyes of the nation. All this is poured out by radio and cable to all parts of the world to the distress of our friends and the delight of our foes.

"I am in favour of the freedom which no other country in the world would use or would dare to use, in times of mortal peril such as those through which we are passing. But the story must not end there and I now make my appeal to the House of Commons to make sure that it does not end there. Although I have done my utmost to prepare a full and considered statement to the House I must confess I have found it very difficult, even during the bitter animosity of the diatribe of Mr. Aneurin Bevan, with all its carefully aimed and calculated hostility, to concentrate my thoughts on this debate and to withdraw them from the tremendous and most critical battle now raging in Egypt."

The military misfortunes of the previous fortnight had transformed the situation not only in Africa but throughout the Mediterranean. The evil effects in Turkey, in Spain, in France and

French North Africa could not yet be measured. The recession of our hopes and prospects was unequalled since the fall of France. If there were any would-be profiteers of disaster who felt able to paint the picture in darker colours they were at liberty to do so. A painful feature of this melancholy scene was its suddenness. The fall of Tobruk was unexpected not merely by the House and the public at large, but by the War Cabinet, by the Chiefs of Staff, by Gen. Auchinleck and the High Command in the Middle East. Only the night before its capture, a telegram had been received from Gen. Auchinleck that he had allotted what he believed to be an adequate garrison, that the defences were in good order, that ninety days' supplies were available for the troops.

The decision to hold Tobruk and the dispositions made for the purpose had been taken by Gen. Auchinleck. "But," went on Winston, "I should like to say that we, the War Cabinet, and our professional advisers thoroughly agreed with the General beforehand. Although in tactical matters the Commander-in-Chief is supreme and his decision final, we consider that if he was wrong we were wrong too. I am very ready, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to take my full share of responsibility." Sir John Wardlaw-Milne had asked where the order for capitulation came from—did it come from the battlefield, from Cairo, from London or from Washington? "In what a strange world of thought he is living if he imagines I sent from Washington an order for capitulation. The decision was taken to the best of my knowledge by the Commander of the Forces and certainly it was most unexpected to the High Command in the Middle East . . .

"When on the morning of Sunday, the 21st, I went into the President's room, I was greatly shocked to be confronted with a report that Tobruk had fallen. I found it difficult to believe, but a few minutes later my own telegram, forwarded from London, arrived. I hope the House will realize what a bitter pang this was to me. What made it worse was being on an important mission in the country of one of our great Allies. Some people assume too readily that, because a Government keeps cool and has steady nerves under reverses, its members do not feel the public misfortunes as keenly as do independent critics. On the contrary, I doubt whether anyone feels greater sorrow or pain than those who are responsible for the general conduct of our affairs.

"It was an aggravation in the days that followed to read distorted accounts of the feeling in Britain and in the House of Commons. The House can have no idea how its proceedings are represented across the ocean. Questions are asked, comments are made by individual members or by independents who represent no organized grouping of political power, which are cabled verbatim, and often quite honestly taken to be the opinion of the House of Commons.

Lobby gossip, echoes from the smoking-room and talk in Fleet Street, are worked up into serious articles seeming to represent that the whole basis of British political life is shaken, or is tottering. A flood of expectation and speculation is let loose. Thus I read streamer headlines like this : ‘Commons demand Churchill return face accusers,’ or ‘Churchill returns to supreme political crisis.’

“Such an atmosphere is naturally injurious to a British representative engaged in negotiating great matters of state upon which the larger issues of the war depend. That these rumours coming from home did not prejudice the work I had to do was due solely to the fact that our American friends are not fair-weather friends. Indeed, the bonds of comradeship between all the men at the top were actually strengthened.

“All the same, I must say I do not think any public man charged with a high mission from this country ever seemed to be barracked from his home land in his absence—unintentionally, I can well believe—to the extent that befell me while on this visit to the United States ; and only my unshakable confidence in the ties which bind me to the mass of the British people upheld me through those days of trial. I naturally explained to my hosts that those who were volatile in Parliament in no way represented the House of Commons, just as the small handful of correspondents who make it their business to pour out damaging tales about our affairs to the United States, and I must add to Australia, in no way represent the honourable profession of journalism. I also explained that all this would be put to the proof when I returned by the House of Commons as a whole expressing a responsible, measured and deliberate opinion, and that is what I am going to ask of it to-day.

“Here I will turn aside to meet a complaint which I have noticed that the Minister of Defence should have been in Washington when the disaster at Tobruk occurred. But Washington was the very place where he should have been. It was there that the most urgent future business of the war was being transacted, not only in regard to the general scene but also in regard to the particular matters that were passing.”

The Prime Minister reviewed the ebb and flow of fighting in the battles of the desert where armies faced each other “in the most forbidding and desolate region in the world under conditions of extreme artificiality, able to reach each other only through a peculiar use of the appliances of modern war.” Having brought the record of operations down to the withdrawal to the Egyptian frontier, he spoke of the reinforcements that were on the way. These he described as being “very considerable,” the only hint he allowed himself to give of the arrangements made while he was still in Washington with the co-operation of the President. It was not until these reinforcements had turned the tide of battle in Africa that

Winston in a later speech<sup>1</sup> was able to complete this part of his narrative.

Although the Army in Libya had been overpowered, the Prime Minister asserted with emphasis "on behalf of the challenged central direction of the war" that this was not due to grudging of reinforcements of men or material. War with Japan had led to the withdrawal of Australian forces for the defence of their homeland. ("It was I who suggested it to them"). Some British units had been sent to India and others due for the Middle East had been retained in India. Nevertheless there had been despatched to the Middle East in the previous two years from Britain, the Empire and to a lesser extent from the United States a total of 950,000 men, 4,500 tanks, 6,000 aircraft and over 100,000 mechanical vehicles—and this despite the supplies sent to Russia. "So far as the central direction of the war is concerned, I can plead," Winston said, "with some confidence that we have not failed in the exertions we have made or in the skill we have shown."

Turning to the question of tanks, Winston answered the critics in some detail, especially Hore Belisha whose term as Secretary for War had covered vital years in the country's preparation for war.

The idea of the tank was a British conception—said the Prime Minister who thereby omitted a great deal more that he might have mentioned as the earlier pages of this narrative have established. The development of the tactical employment of tanks was largely French. The Germans converted the ideas to their own use, being busily at work for three or four years before the war with their usual thoroughness. And Britain?

"One would have thought," Winston went on, "that even if the Secretary for War of those days could not get the money for large-scale manufacture, he would at any rate have had full-size working models made and tested them out exhaustively and the factories chosen and the jigs and gauges supplied so that he could go into the mass production of tanks and anti-tank weapons when the war began. When what I may call the Belisha period ended, we were left with some 250 armoured vehicles, very few of which carried even a 2-pounder gun. Most of them were captured or destroyed in France.

"After the war began designs were settled and orders on a considerable scale were placed by the rt. hon. gentleman. There was no time to make improvements at the expense of supply. We had to concentrate upon numbers, upon quantity instead of quality. That was a major decision to which I have no doubt we were rightly guided."

Hore Belisha here asked leave to interrupt. "I should have thought," he said, "that if my right hon. friend wanted to make

<sup>1</sup> See page 433.

reference to technical matters during my period of office, he would have told me, so that I could have had access to the facts for my defence."

The Prime Minister: "I was only citing the facts as they are known to me. I have not been concerned to make a detailed attack upon the right hon. gentleman's administration of the War Office I am explaining that we had, at the time after Dunkirk, to concentrate upon numbers. We had to make thousands of armoured vehicles with which our troops could beat the enemy off the beaches when they landed and fight them in the lanes and fields of Kent or Norfolk.

"When the new tanks came out they had grievous defects, the correction of which caused delay, and this would have been avoided if the preliminary experiments on the scale of 12 inches to the foot—that is full scale—had been carried out at an earlier period. . . . I am, at the present moment, only dealing with the Matildas, Cruisers and Valentines which I may say belong to the Belisha group. In spite of the fact that there was this undoubted delay through no preliminary work having been carried as far as it should have been, it would be wrong in my opinion to write off as useless this group of tanks. They have rendered great services and they are to-day of real value. . . .

"Shortly after the present National Government was formed, in June 1940 to be exact, I called a meeting of all the authorities' to design and make a new tank capable of speedy mass production, and adapted to the conditions to be foreseen in 1942. Of course I do not settle the technical details of tank design any more than I interfere with purely tactical decisions of generals in the field. All the highest expert authorities were brought together several times and made to hammer out a strong, heavy tank adapted primarily for the defence of this island against invasion, but capable of other employment in various theatres. This tank, the A22, was ordered off the drawing-board and large numbers went into production very quickly. As might be expected it had many defects and teething troubles and when these became apparent the tank was appropriately rechristened the 'Churchill'.<sup>1</sup> These defects have now been largely overcome."

A later tank of greater speed was designed a year later. Neither tank had yet been employed against the enemy although the earliest two made were sent out to Egypt to be tested and made desert-worthy. It had to be remembered that it required about six months to get a gun or tank from this country into the hands of the troops in the

<sup>1</sup> Replying to a question in the House at a later date the Prime Minister said he had had no part in the naming decision and added, "I can well believe that the fact it was called by this particular name afforded a motive to various persons to endeavour to cover it with their slime."

Nile Valley. The date on which the battle began was a date before the new and improved weapon could have been got into the hands of the troops. For the first battle the equipment had been adequate. For the recent battle, it was sought to make up by numbers an admitted inferiority in quality.

As to dive-bombers and transport aircraft, the highest technical opinion was divided. It could not be judged whether we ought to have had dive-bombers at any particular date without considering what would have been given up as a consequence. Most of the Air Marshals, the leading men in the Air Force thought little of dive-bombers and persisted in their opinion. They were entitled to be heard with respect because it was from the same source that the 8-gun fighter was designed which destroyed so many hundreds of the dive-bombers in the Battle of Britain.

Aneurin Bevan : The dive-bomber in the Battle of Britain was adapted by the Germans for a use never intended for the dive-bomber. It was shot down over Britain because it was wrongly used.

The Prime Minister : In what way does that affect the argument I am holding—that if we had made dive-bombers instead, we might not have had the 8-gun fighters to shoot down the Ju.87's when they came over. I remember well forty years ago rising to interrupt the late Mr. Balfour and after I had said what I had to say he rebuked me, saying, "I thought my hon. friend rose to correct me on some point of fact, but it appears that he only wishes to continue the argument."

Returning to the main question before the House, Winston said he willingly accepted what Lord Winterton had termed the "constitutional responsibility" for everything that had happened, and he claimed that he had discharged that responsibility by not interfering with the technical handling of armies in contact with the enemy. But before the battle began, he had urged General Auchinleck to take command himself. Now, General Auchinleck had superseded General Ritchie and assumed command.

"We at once," said Winston, "approved his decision, but I must frankly confess that the matter was not one on which we could form any final judgment, so far as the superseded officer is concerned. I cannot pretend to form a judgment upon what has happened in this battle. I like commanders on land and sea and in the air to feel that between them and all forms of public criticism the Government stands like a strong bulkhead. They ought to have a fair chance, and more than one chance.

"Men may make mistakes and learn from their mistakes. Men may have bad luck, and their luck may change. But anyhow you will not get generals to run risks unless they feel they have behind them a strong Government. They will not run risks unless they feel they need not look over their shoulders or worry about

what is happening at home, unless they feel they can concentrate their gaze upon the enemy. And you will not, I may add, get a Government to run risks unless they feel that they have got behind them a loyal, solid majority."

He had been reproached for having predicted that Singapore would hold out. "What a fool and a knave I should have been to say it would fall," he retorted. "I have not made any arrogant, confident, boasting predictions at all. On the contrary I have stuck hard to my 'blood, toil, tears and sweat,' to which I have added muddle and mismanagement, and that to some extent I must admit is what you have got out of it. I repudiate altogether the suggestion that I misled the House on June 2nd about the present campaign. All I said was that

It is clear that we have every reason to be satisfied and more than satisfied with the course the battle has so far taken and that we should watch its further development with earnest attention

"Nothing could be more guarded. I do not know what my critics would like me to say now. If I predict success and speak in buoyant terms, and misfortune continues, their pens and tongues will be able to dilate upon my words. On the other hand, if I predict failure and paint the picture in darkest hues, I might safeguard myself against one danger, but only at the expense of a struggling army. Also I might be wrong. So I will say nothing about the future except to invite the House and the nation to face with courage whatever it may unfold."

In the concluding passages of the speech Winston made protest against recurrent political crises and he rejected in strongest terms the suggestion that he should continue as Prime Minister but not as Minister of Defence. "I wish," he said, "to speak a few words 'of great truth and respect'—as they say in the diplomatic documents—and I hope I may be granted the fullest liberty of debate.

"This Parliament has a peculiar responsibility. It presided over the beginning of the evils which have come on the world. I owe much to the House, and it is my hope that it may see the end of them in triumph. This it can only do if, in the long period which may yet have to be travelled, the House affords a solid foundation to the responsible Executive Government, placed in power by its own choice. The House must be a steady, stabilizing factor in the State, and not an instrument by which the disaffected sections of the Press can attempt to promote one crisis after another. If democracy and Parliamentary institutions are to triumph in this war, it is absolutely necessary that Governments resting upon them shall be able to act and dare, that the servants of the Crown shall not be harassed by nagging and snarling, that enemy propaganda shall not be fed needlessly out of our own hands, and our reputation disparaged

and undermined throughout the world. On the contrary, the will of the whole House should be made manifest upon important occasions.

"It is important that not only those who speak, but those who watch and listen and judge, should also count as a factor in world affairs. After all, we are still fighting for our lives, and for causes dearer than life itself. We have no right to assume that victory is certain ; it will be certain only if we do not fail in our duty. Sober and constructive criticism, or criticism in secret session, has its high virtue ; but the duty of the House of Commons is to sustain the Government or to change the Government. If it cannot change it, it should sustain it. There is no working middle course in wartime. Much harm was done abroad by the two days' debate in May. Only the hostile speeches are reported abroad, and much play is made with them by our enemy.

"There is an agitation in the Press, which has found its echo in a number of hostile speeches, to deprive me of the function which I exercise in the general conduct and supervision of the war. I do not propose to argue this to-day at any length, because it was much discussed in a recent debate. . . . I work myself under the supervision and control of the War Cabinet, to whom all important matters are referred, and whom I have to carry with me in all major decisions. Nearly all my work has been done in writing, and a complete record exists of all the directions I have given, the inquiries I have made, and the telegrams I have drafted. I shall be perfectly content to be judged by them.

"I ask no favours either for myself or for His Majesty's Government. I undertook the office of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, after defending my predecessor to the best of my ability, in times when the life of the Empire hung upon a thread. I am your servant, and you have the right to dismiss me when you please. What you have no right to do is to ask me to bear the responsibilities without the power of effective action, to bear the responsibilities of Prime Minister but clamped on each side by strong men, as one hon. Member said. If to-day, or at any future time, the House were to exercise its undoubted right, I could walk out with a good conscience and the feeling that I have done my duty according to such light as has been granted to me. There is only one thing I would ask of you in that event. It would be to give my successor the modest powers which would have been denied to me.

"But there is a larger issue than the personal issue. The mover of this Vote of Censure has proposed that I should be stripped of my responsibilities for defence in order that some military figure or some other unnamed personage should assume the general conduct of the war, that he should have complete control of the Armed Forces of the Crown, that he should be the Chief of the

Chiefs of the Staff, that he should nominate or dismiss the generals or the admirals, that he should always be ready to resign, that is to say, to match himself against his political colleagues, if colleagues they could be considered, if he did not get all he wanted, that he should have under him a Royal Duke as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and finally, I presume, though this was not mentioned, that this unnamed personage should find an appendage in the Prime Minister to make the necessary explanations, excuses and apologies to Parliament when things go wrong, as they often do and often will. That is at any rate a policy. It is a system very different from the Parliamentary system under which we live. It might easily amount to or be converted into a dictatorship. I wish to make it perfectly clear that as far as I am concerned I shall take no part in such a system”

Sir J. Wardlaw-Milne : I hope that my right hon friend has not forgotten the original sentence, which was “subject to the War Cabinet?”

Mr. Churchill : “Subject to the War Cabinet, against which this all-powerful potentate is not to hesitate to resign on every occasion if he could not get his way. It is a plan, but it is not a plan in which I should personally be interested to take part, and I do not think that it is one which would commend itself to this House.

“The setting down of this Vote of Censure by Members of all parties is a considerable event. Do not, I beg you, let the House underrate the gravity of what has been done. It has been trumpeted all round the world to our disparagement, and when every nation, friend and foe, is waiting to see what is the true resolve and conviction of the House of Commons, it must go forward to the end. All over the world, throughout the United States, as I can testify, in Russia, far away in China, and throughout every subjugated country, all our friends are waiting to know whether there is a strong, solid Government in Britain and whether its national leadership is to be challenged or not. Every vote counts. If those who have assailed us are reduced to contemptible proportions and their vote of censure on the National Government is converted to a vote of censure upon its authors, make no mistake, a cheer will go up from every friend of Britain and every faithful servant of our cause, and the knell of disappointment will ring in the ears of the tyrants we are striving to overthrow.”

The House divided and there voted for the censure motion 25 against 475. The opponents were drawn from all parties—eight Conservatives, eight Labour, six Independents, three I.L.P. Members and two Liberals. About thirty Members abstained from voting, including Sir A. Southby, Sir I. Albery, Earl Winterton, Lady Astor, Prof. Hill, E. Shinwell, Seymour Cocks, Mr. Price (a signatory of the motion), Lady Megan Lloyd George, and Henderson Stewart.

Those who went into the Division Lobby against the Government that day were :

F. J. Bellenger	B. V. Kirby
Aneurin Bevan	T. Levy
F G Bowles	J McGovern
W J Brown	J Maxton
G R Hall Caine	Sir J H Morris-Jones
Clement Davies	Cunningham Reid
G Gledhill	S S Silverman
E L Granville	A C M Spearman
Haden Guest	Campbell Stephen
T L Horabin	G. R Stokes
L Hore Belisha	Sir J S Wardlaw-Milne
W D Kendall	Sir H G Williams
Admiral Sir R. Keyes	

The tellers for the motion were Neil Maclean and Commander Bower.

When next he made a war statement to the House, Winston expressed his appreciation of the majority that had been accorded him—"proof to the world of the inflexible steadiness of Parliament and of its sense of proportion." By then the tables had been turned in North Africa. Under Alexander and Montgomery, Allied forces had decisively defeated Rommel and begun the long series of successes that blazed the trail of victory from El Alamein to Tunisia, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, the Rhine and the Elbe.

The censure debate marked the end of effective attacks on Winston Churchill. With the turn of the tide of battle later in the year the times became less and less opportune for criticism of the central direction of the war. Looking back one cannot but wonder at the vast measure of blame with which the Prime Minister was saddled in the days of our reverses. And now, in the times of our successes, what then?

Perhaps we may yet be startled by the confessions of former critics and too candid friends going into reverse.

Mr. Sloan of South Ayrshire may be heard restoring Winston's star to the firmament from which he displaced it with growing speed.

Mr. Stokes the director may repent of the premature discovery of a political Jonah.

The learned professor from Cambridge may re-evaluate the results of strategic bombing.

Wardlaw-Milne may gratify Members with the confession that he ceased to be afraid of what was coming next when the Prime Minister indulged in an optimistic statement.

Aneurin Bevan may express doubts about his own conceptions of strategy, mediaeval or otherwise.

Above all, it would be a delight to hear Hore Belisha—shivers

no longer running down his spine—refreshing the House with an expression of his belief that “From the time of El Alamein, I do not think you can divorce the almost unending and unbroken sequence of strategic successes from this mixture of the political and military elements in your war machine.”<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### *Mission to Moscow*

DURING the summer of 1942 the problem of Russia was added to the urgency of the burdens of the Prime Minister and his colleagues in the War Cabinet. After twelve months as Allies, questions of delicacy arose which Winston felt could be handled only at a personal meeting with Premier Stalin. So it came about that the Prime Minister made the first of his journeys to the East, to carry on the work of Britain’s peripatetic plenipotentiary that had been so fruitful of goodwill in the West.

Since the June Sunday in 1941 when Winston and his fellow Ministers made Britain and Russia allies—one of the decisive choices in the world’s history—relations between Capitalist Britain and Communist Russia had grown in harmony. The people of this country had endorsed the Prime Minister’s lead. Misconceptions and antagonisms between the two peoples that had prevailed since the October Revolution, were gradually diminishing. London, in the spring of 1942, did honour to the founder of the Communist state, a bust of Lenin being unveiled opposite the house in Holbrook Square, Finsbury, where he had made his home in exile for some months in 1902 and 1903.

In May, 1942, the Governments of Britain and the U.S S R. reached an agreement for regularizing their relations by the conclusion of a Treaty of Alliance. On May 21st, a Russian delegation, headed by the Foreign Minister, M. Molotov, came to this country for the final formalities. They were the guests of the Prime Minister at Chequers. On the Tuesday of Whit week, Molotov and Ivan Maisky, the popular Soviet Ambassador in London, attended at Eden’s Room at the Foreign Office to append their signatures, with those of the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, to the instrument of Alliance. This was not limited to mutual aid during the common struggle, but pledged the two peoples to work together

<sup>1</sup> This passage was written some months before the General Election and I have allowed it to stand though the fortunes of the poll put it beyond the power of some of the Members named to make any statement on the new House of Commons.

in days of peace for the organization of security and economic prosperity in Europe. It was provided that the agreement would remain in force for twenty years, in the absence of a mutual agreement to the contrary.

By the British public, as by the people of Russia, the Alliance was cordially welcomed. Political differences had been transcended by the necessities and comradeship of war. Right Wing and Left Wing were united in support and admiration of Russian resistance to the Nazi onslaught. Public opinion was not satisfied with professions of friendship, with the conclusion of an alliance and the despatch of munitions of war. As the Russian armies for the second summer bore the brunt of the attack of Hitler's massed divisions, the feeling grew that the Western Allies should open a second front in Europe as the means of drawing off some of the Nazi forces. In the public mind there was little realization of the magnitude of the task, of the intricacy of planning, of the complexities of the preparations that would be needed. Public emotion was many months ahead of military practicability.

On all hands there were calls for the opening of a second front without delay. Demonstrations in Trafalgar Square in March clamoured for it. Lord Beaverbrook on the American radio advocated it. Women from the munition factories travelled to London to appeal for it. The walls of our towns and the tarmac of our roads proclaimed : "Open a Second Front NOW." In May, Stafford Cripps, in a public statement, testified to the Government's keenness to launch a second front, and he added : "The only difference between us is that you who urge it, can talk freely about it, whereas we cannot because we have two responsibilities—to organize it at the proper time and place and not to give the enemy any information of our intentions."

A Foreign Office communiqué during the Alliance conversations made official reference to the possibility of opening a second front, recording that : "Full understanding was reached between the two parties with regard to the urgent task of creating a second front in Europe in 1942. M. Molotov, M. Maisky, Major-Gen. Issayev and Rear-Admiral Kharlamov and Mr. Churchill, Mr. Attlee, Mr. Eden and the British Chiefs of Staff took part in the conversations on this point."

In London and Washington much anxious thought was given by the two Governments in consultation with their military advisers to the opening of a second front in Europe. After a thorough investigation the Chiefs of Staff advised against the attempt in the existing state of Allied strength and preparations. The decision was unpalatable to Stalin and the Soviet war leaders, and it was because of this that Winston decided to make the Parliamentary recess in the summer of 1942 the occasion for visiting Moscow. It was the

decision of a man of courage. It is simple enough to pay a call on your ally when you see eye to eye with him, but not so easy when you must deny your ally the main thing he is asking of you. Nevertheless, as he said later, Winston considered it was his duty to "express himself."

Travelling by air from Egypt, he reached Moscow on August 12th. With him were Field Marshal Brooke, C.I.G.S., Air Marshal Tedder, Chief of the Middle East Air Command, and Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office. Wavell journeyed from India to be present, arriving a day late owing to a mishap to his 'plane. President Roosevelt was personally represented by Averell Harriman and Major-Gen. Maxwell, C-in-C. American Forces in Egypt, was also of the party. There was a ceremonial welcome at Moscow aerodrome when the Liberators touched down. Stalin had sent the Foreign Commissar, M. Molotov, and the Chief of Staff, Marshal Shaposhnikov, to bid his guests greeting. The band of the Soviet Guards played God Save the King and The Star-Spangled Banner, in honour of the visitors. Winston, in a brief speech, recorded for broadcasting, expressed the purpose of his mission and the determination of the Allies, whatever the sufferings and difficulties ahead, to continue the struggle "hand-in-hand with our comrades and brothers until the last remnants of the Hitler régime have turned to dust and remain in our memories as a warning and example for the future" To this Averell Harriman added the assurance that his President would agree to all the decisions taken by Mr. Churchill, adding: "Americans will stand hand-in-hand together with the Russians"

At the Kremlin that evening the Prime Minister and Mr. Harriman were received by Premier Stalin. The first meeting lasted for four hours and the following day was given up to conferences. A Kremlin banquet brought the business of the second day to a close. The emergency of war was not allowed to reduce Russian hospitality. The dinner, at which all members of the Soviet Government were present, was marked by a minimum of formality. A full score of 25 toasts were drunk, half a dozen of them proposed by Premier Stalin himself

The cordiality which marked the banquet had not extended to the formal discussions between the chiefs of state. The Russians had not disguised their disappointment that no second front was imminent in Europe.

The Prime Minister was to take his leave of his Russian hosts the following day. Till then the discussions, which had been frank, could scarcely have been termed harmonious. Stalin invited Winston to supper and a concluding talk. It was the decisive meeting of the visit. Supper began at 7 o'clock. At midnight the two statesmen were still smoking and talking. At one in the morning the two

Foreign Affairs experts were called in, M. Molotov and Sir Alexander Cadogan. The discussions proceeded and it was not until three in the morning that they were brought to a close. It was a sleepless night for Winston, for at five he was due to take off on the first stage of his homeward flight. He could, however, reckon the night to have been well spent. The Kremlin supper party had wrought a transformation. The talks that had begun in an atmosphere of restraint ended with feelings of friendliness. The Prime Minister had been able to break down Soviet mistrust. Russian chagrin at the delay over the opening of the second front could not be removed, but the suspicions the delay had given rise to, these were blown away. It was a considerable achievement.

Not until the conferences were over was the news of the visit broken to the Press of the Allied nations. The Germans had learned of it before this and Goebbels resorted to an ingenious line in propaganda as a means of belittling the meeting. Churchill, according to the Nazis, had been forced to go to Moscow because Stalin was demanding an immediate invasion of Europe and there he was to be held, a prisoner in the Kremlin, until the second front materialized. As, quite undeniably, the Prime Minister was not detained in Moscow the conclusion for those credulous enough to accept the Nazi inventions, was inevitable—a second front must be imminent. And if the Nazis reached that conclusion it was all to the good.

Whether such a decision had, in fact, been taken, the world was left for a time in doubt. It was a question all Russia asked when the announcement of the meetings was made. The hard-pressed Russians had been buoyed up, earlier in the summer, by hopes of a second front in 1942. As the weeks passed without an invasion, hopes waned, enthusiasm for the Anglo-Soviet Alliance gave way to doubts and suspicions about the intentions of the Western Allies. How, indeed, could that sorely tried people not wonder over the reason, when many at home in Britain failed at the time to understand the cause for delay? People who were hesitating about the second front in the year 1942 might also hesitate in the following year—"and why not?" asked a correspondent in the *New Statesman*. "Why not?" they asked in Moscow, not merely the man in the Moscow street, but men in the Kremlin as well.

It was the achievement of Winston's mission that he was able to establish in Stalin's mind that these suspicions were ill-founded. Stalin, in public speech, was able to remove them from the minds of the Russian people.

For plain speaking between Allied leaders, these Moscow "talkings over" (as the Russians designated the negotiations) stand out for their frankness among the conclaves of the war. The urgency of Stalin's case—he stated it publicly for the world to hear a few weeks later—was unchallengeable. The Russians fighting

alone in Europe were bearing the full weight of the German armies to the number of 240 divisions. In North Africa the Allies were engaging four German divisions with which eleven divisions of Italians were associated. Losses in the fighting on the Russian front were unparalleled in the history of war. The German armies might be bleeding to death, but Russian lands had been devastated right to the Caucasus. In place of a second front in Europe, Churchill and Harriman were able to inform the Russians of the designs for Anglo-American landings to be made in North Africa. For Stalin the essential consideration was how many enemy divisions would this divert—would it be the eighty divisions, which was his estimate of the relief a landing in North Europe would afford him? The arithmetic of divisions was something of a barrier to Russian understanding of the Allied problem. To move divisions by land is an operation of simplicity compared with the throwing of them upon a hostile coast from ships at sea—and as Winston confessed later, it was not easy to make our ally comprehend all the problems of the sea, for the Russian is “a land animal”

The Prime Minister gave an account of his mission when the House of Commons met after the recess, in a speech on September 8th. He said :

“We spent four days in conferences, with Premier Stalin and M. Molotov, sitting sometimes for five and six hours at a time, and we went into everything with the utmost candour and thoroughness. At the same time, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and General Wavell, who accompanied me, had further conferences with Marshals Voroshilov and Shaposhnikov and dealt with the more technical aspects of our joint affairs. Naturally I should not give any account of the subjects we discussed or still less of the conclusions which we reached. I have reported all these to the War Cabinet, and Mr. Harriman has reported them to President Roosevelt, but all must remain secret.

“I may say, however, that the Russians do not think that we or the Americans have done enough so far to take the weight off them. This is not at all surprising, in view of the terrific onslaught which they are enduring and withstanding with such marvellous tenacity. No one in the last war would have deemed it possible that Russia could have stood up, as she has been doing, to the whole weight of the Teutonic armies. I say the whole weight, because although there are 40 to 45 German divisions facing us in the west and holding down the subjugated countries, these numbers are more than made up against Russia by Finnish, Hungarian, Rumanian and Italian troops who have been dragged by Hitler into this frightful welter.

“It is a proof of the increased strength which Premier Stalin has given to Russia that this prodigious feat of the resistance of

Russia alone to the equivalent of the whole of the Teutonic army has been accomplished for so long and with so great a measure of success. It is difficult to make the Russians comprehend all the problems of the sea and of the ocean. We are sea animals and the United States are to a large extent ocean animals. The Russians are land animals. Happily, we are all three air animals. It is difficult to explain fully all the different characteristics of the war effort of various countries, but I am sure that we made their leaders feel confidence in our loyal and sincere resolve to come to their aid as quickly as possible and in the most effective manner without regard to the losses or sacrifices involved so long as the contribution was towards victory."

Winston went on to pay tribute to the Soviet leader.

"The main object of my visit was to establish the same relations of easy confidence and of perfect openness which I have built up with President Roosevelt. I think that, in spite of the accident of the Tower of Babel which persists as a very serious barrier in numerous spheres, I have succeeded to a considerable extent.

"It is very fortunate for Russia in her agony to have this great rugged war chief at her head. He is a man of massive outstanding personality, suited to the sombre and stormy times in which his life has been cast; a man of inexhaustible courage and will-power and a man direct and even blunt in speech, which, having been brought up in the House of Commons, I do not mind at all, especially when I have something to say of my own. Above all, he is a man with that saving sense of humour which is of high importance to all men and all nations, but particularly to great men and great nations. Stalin also left upon me the impression of a deep, cool wisdom and a complete absence of illusions of any kind. I believe I made him feel that we were good and faithful comrades in this war—but that, after all, is a matter which deeds, not words, will prove

"One thing stands out in my mind above all others from this visit to Moscow—the inexorable, inflexible resolve of Soviet Russia to fight Hitlerism to the end until it is finally beaten down. Premier Stalin said to me that the Russian people are naturally peaceful people, but the atrocious cruelties inflicted upon them by the Germans have roused them to such a fury of indignation that their whole nature is transformed."

As the weeks passed, it became obvious that there was, after all, to be no second front in 1942. In October, Stalin himself made a public reference to what was still the most controversial topic in Allied affairs. A series of questions was submitted to him by the

Associated Press Correspondent in Moscow, Henry Cassidy. The first two of them and the answers Stalin gave were :

Question . What place does the possibility of a second front occupy in the Soviet estimate of the current situation ? •

Stalin . A very important place—one might say a place of first-rate importance

Question : To what extent is Allied aid to the Soviet Union proving effective, and what could be done to amplify and improve this aid ?

Stalin : As compared with the aid which the Soviet Union is giving to the Allies by drawing upon itself the main forces of the German Fascist armies the aid of the Allies to the Soviet Union has so far been little effective. In order to amplify and improve this aid, only one thing is required—that the Allies fulfil their obligations fully and on time.

This airing of Russian grievances caused a stir amongst the Western Allies. "A disturbing document obviously intended to disturb," commented *The Times*. Premier Stalin amplified his views in his speech on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Soviet state. How was it to be explained, he asked, that the Germans had succeeded in gaining such serious successes in the East ? The answer was their numerical superiority—more than 3,000,000 of the enemy were facing the Red Army. The absence of the second front enabled them to carry out this operation without risk to themselves. According to verified data, out of 256 divisions at Germany's disposal, no fewer than 179 were fighting against Russia, to which had to be added, 22 Rumanian divisions, 14 Finnish, 10 Italian, 13 Hungarian, 1 Slovak and 1 Spanish—a total of 240 divisions. Had there been a second front in Europe as in the first world war, it might have diverted 60 German divisions and 20 divisions of the Nazi allies. The position of the German troops in the East would then have been deplorable. It would have been the beginning of the end.

Stalin went on to answer those in Russia who doubted whether a second front would come. Sooner or later it would come, not only because the Russians needed it but, above all, because it was no less needed by the Allies. Some people thought that because the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition was composed of elements with different ideologies, its members would be incapable of joint action against the common foe. These people were wrong. It would be ridiculous to deny the existence of differences in ideology and in the structure of their states but this did not exclude co-ordinated action against the enemy. There had been no estrangement between members of the Coalition—on the contrary there had been a steady rapprochement between its members.

Within a week of this frank speech, with its appreciation of the growing rapprochement between the U.S.S.R. and the Western

democracies, Winston made an unusually frank and appreciative statement to the House of Commons. This completed his report on the mission to Moscow. By this time (November 11th) the British and Americans had launched their first great combined offensive by landing in North Africa and Winston was able to make a full disclosure of Allied strategy and its immediate purpose.

Having acknowledged the great services the Russian armies were rendering to the Allied cause ("they have killed or permanently put out of action far more millions than Germany lost in the whole of the last war") he said that he fully recognized the force of what Premier Stalin had said of the enormous weight thrown on Russia. "My heart has bled for Russia. I have felt what everyone, almost, in this House must have felt—that intense desire that we should be suffering with her and that we should take some of the weight off her. Everything he said about the disproportionate burden is perfectly true." It was evident that Russia was at least three times as strong a living organism as she was in the last war. As the Russians had borne the burden and heat of the day it was quite natural on their part, and fully within their rights, that they should make the very strong and stark assertions they had made.

Our need was not merely to help them, but to help them suitably and effectively. It might have been a relief to our feelings to have delivered a premature attack, to have organized a dozen Dieppes<sup>1</sup> in one day and a couple of Dunkirks a week or two later. A disaster of that nature would not have been a help but would be one of the greatest disservice to Russia. The attack to be made in due course across the Channel or the North Sea would require an immense degree of preparation, vast numbers of landing-craft, a great many men trained in amphibious warfare. These preparations were proceeding but they needed time. The chance of weather, the difficulties of tides, and other factors ("I could speak for an hour on them") made the task of moving an army across the Channel a problem which happily for us—it cuts both ways—had never yet been solved.

It would not have been physically possible to have made an effective invasion of the Continent in the summer or autumn of 1942. Having proclaimed the fact, Winston went on to answer the question which had been widely asked : Why then did you allow false hopes to be raised in Russian breasts, why did you agree with the United States and Russia to a communiqué which spoke of a second front in Europe in 1942 ?

"I must say quite frankly," he said, "that I hold it perfectly

<sup>1</sup> The Dieppe raid on August 19, 1942, a reconnaissance in force, was a large-scale test for the eventual invasion. The Germans put out the story that they had frustrated an attempt at invasion, for which in the early stages they had mistaken it. The success of the operation caused them to augment their garrison in North France

justifiable to deceive the enemy even if, at the same time, your own people are for a while misled. There is one thing, however, you may never do and that is to mislead your Ally. You must never make a promise which you do not fulfil. I hope we shall see we have lived up to that standard.

"All British promises to Russia have been made in writing or given across the table in recorded conversations with the Soviet representatives. In June, I gave the Russian Government a written document making it perfectly clear that while we were preparing to make a landing in 1942 we could not promise to do so. Meanwhile, whether or not we were going to attack the Continent in August or September, it was of the utmost importance to Russia that the enemy should believe we were so prepared and so resolved. Only in this way could we draw and keep the largest number of Germans pinned in the Pas de Calais, along the coast of France, and in the Low Countries.

"We have kept at least thirty-three German divisions in the west. One-third of the German fighter force is there, not being used. A large proportion of the German bomber force is also there and is not being used to bomb us to any extent. Why? It has been saved up for these very landings should they occur on these beaches and it has remained playing no effective military part for a considerable time."

Some of the best German aircraft were operating in the Far North trying to impede Allied convoys to Russia. Here was another promise to the Russians it had been very costly to maintain. Every one of the nineteen convoys sent to Russia had been an important naval operation because the enemy's main fleet was close at hand. The latest convoy had required the use of seventy-seven ships of war apart altogether from supply ships. An immense output of munitions had been sent to Russia<sup>1</sup> during a period when we ourselves were being vehemently and quite naturally reproached for the comparative ill equipment of our own troops.

The Prime Minister explained to the House the considerations which impelled the Western Allies to make their main attack in North Africa in preference to Northern Europe (as related in the following chapter) and went on: "It was necessary to explain the whole position to Premier Stalin. I thought it better, and my colleagues pressed this view upon me, that I should deal with this matter face to face, rather than leave it to the ordinary diplomatic channels. It was a very serious conversation which I had to under-

<sup>1</sup> In the twelve months to October 1942, there were despatched to Russia by the Northern route, 3,052 aircraft, 4,084 tanks, 30,031 vehicles, 831,000 tons of cargo, 42,000 tons of aviation spirit and 66,000 tons of motor oil. Not all the goods despatched reached their destination, but the great bulk had done so, stated Mr. Richard Law, who gave the figures.

take. I therefore sought and obtained the permission of the War Cabinet to make the journey.

"I am sure that the course adopted prevented a great deal of friction and ill-feeling between us and our Russian Ally . . . I assure the House that I have a solid belief in the wisdom and good faith of this outstanding man (Stalin) and although the news that I brought was not welcome and was not considered by them to be adequate, nevertheless the fact remains that we parted good friends and, in the words which Stalin uses, a complete understanding exists between us. The Russians bore their disappointments like men. They faced the enemy and now they have reached the winter successfully, although we were unable to give them the help they so earnestly demanded and, had it been physically practicable, we would so gladly have accorded to them."

The controversial issue of the second front in Europe may be judged to-day in its proper perspective. Time, which exposes wrong decisions, endorses decisions rightly taken. There are few to-day who would be disposed to challenge the decision made in 1942, but under the stress of current events, resentment might have soured relations between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. They remained unimpaired and increased in cordiality. Not many months afterwards came the Soviet gesture of goodwill—the disbandment of the Comintern. The termination of the Communist International served not merely to rob Goebbels of his favourite bogey of Bolshevism, but testified to Stalin's wish for harmonious collaboration with the United Nations when the world war had been won. Winston's mission to Moscow had been fruitful of goodwill.

While public attention was focused on relations with our Soviet Ally, preparations were concluded for the invasion of North Africa, which marked the turning point, or to use Winston's term, a climacteric of the war.

## CHAPTER VII

### *One Continent Redeemed*

PRESIDENT and Prime Minister took no bolder decision than when they chose North Africa for their first combined offensive. Later and greater events have tended to overshadow this initial assault. Yet this operation was the most hazardous of the series in that it was the first Allied trial of land-sea-and-air invasion of a hostile coast. In the war of ideas, even Normandy was but North Africa repeated on a vaster scale.

Between the spring and autumn of 1942 the first essential victory had been won in the long-drawn-out battle of supplies.. In the spring, we had been hard pressed to keep the Desert Army fighting. By the autumn, we had for the first time a sufficiency of weapons of war to begin to carry the fight to the enemy. The handicap of the lost years was being overcome.

The Germans by then were exposed to the penalty of their own successes. They had swept East and West and South and North and their armies were now so fully committed that at any chosen point on the vast periphery of their territories the Allies could bring superior forces to bear.

So, while the farthest Nazi waves were vainly breaking against the bastion of Stalingrad and at the approaches to Egypt, Allied plans were maturing that were to bring about the turning of the tide.

The Army of the Desert had been decisively worsted in the fighting at midsummer. Rommel had sent a shudder of anxiety through the Egyptian world. Mussolini was encouraged to cross the waters of his "Mare Nostrum" and strut, a blue and gold peacock on the Tobruk promenade, waiting, as he once had waited from a safe distance for the march on Rome, ready to play the conquering hero.

As soon as the Parliamentary recess gave him some relief from his duties at Westminster, the Prime Minister set off by Liberator for the Middle East. It was the first stage of the journey that, as has been related, took him to Moscow. Before flying on to meet Premier Stalin, he spent some days in North Africa, refreshing himself by contact with the fighting men and deciding upon changes in their Commanders which added the names of Alexander and Montgomery to history's roll of fame. He was joined at Cairo by his old friend Smuts and he made extensive tours in the desert, visiting the very ground where, within a few weeks, one of the decisive battles of the war was to be fought out, in the desolate region that lies to the north of the Qattara Depression.

Before he left home he had received reports on the condition of the Allied forces in North Africa. They had been driven back 400 miles and 80,000 men had fallen prisoner to the enemy. On arrival he found the conviction was universal amongst officers and men that they could beat the Germans man to man and face to face. But this was coupled with a sense of being baffled and of not understanding why so many misfortunes had befallen their Army. It was clear that "drastic changes were required in the High Command and that the Army must have a new start under new leaders."

For the Supreme Command, Alexander was chosen to succeed Auchinleck.

The Alexander-Montgomery combination did not come into being by original design. But for the mischance of war, the team

would have been Alexander-Gott, and "Monty" might not have been known to fame. First choice for commander of the 8th Army was General Gott, commander of the XIIIth Corps and previously of the 7th Armoured Division. Gott's name had been submitted by Winston to the War Cabinet in London for final telegraphic endorsement when he was killed, victim of a Nazi fighter 'plane, when going, by air, for brief leave before taking up the appointment. So, Bernard Montgomery was hastily brought out from the South-Eastern Command to fill the vacancy and the empty scroll of fame. Until then he was unknown to the newspaper headlines and when the time came for the scribes to add personality to the name, they could but write that this was a general of original mind who was known to be utterly self-confident and ruthlessly efficient.

During his stay in the Middle East, Winston met King Farouk and then travelled on to Moscow for his talks with Stalin. On the homeward flight he touched down at Teheran to lunch with the young Shah of Iran. By mid-August he was back in Egypt and visited many units at the front, including men of his old regiment, the 4th Hussars. One night he spent with Montgomery, by then installed in his motor-caravan headquarters. The Prime Minister, Alexander (Old Harrovians both) and Montgomery talked far into the night, and from Monty, Winston heard an exposé of the plan of the coming operations.

From the time of the first battle of Alamein, in which Auchinleck had foiled the initial enemy onslaught, there had been a pause on the Desert Front. Then at the end of August, Rommel made his second attack, to be repulsed with heavy losses. The battle was fought out between the Qattara Depression and the Mediterranean. The Allied forces were ranged along the hills that run thirty miles or so south from the small coastal town of El Alamein. Between our southern flank and the vast natural barrier of the Qattara salt marshes, there was a gap offering the enemy a line of advance. Had he cared to risk the presence of our armies on his flank he could have attempted to push through to the Nile. He advanced into the gap, but not relishing the thrust ahead while our armies remained to the north, he sought to dispose of them first. The results of his attack were made known by Winston to the House of Commons (September 8th).

"Rommel came round our Southern flank last Monday week," he said, "in a major offensive. It did not seem to our commanders that he would dare to by-pass the Desert Army, with its formidable armoured striking power, and push on to Cairo, and in this they were right. Rommel strove to repeat the tactics he had used at Gazala. He was met not only by British armour but by British artillery used on a scale hitherto unprecedented. We had many hundreds of 25-pounders, as good a field gun as exists in the world, as well

as many hundreds of 6-pounder high velocity anti-tank guns in action. We had a good superiority in armour, though we were not quite equal in the heaviest-gunned tanks, and we had once again undoubtedly mastery in the air. The attack of the Axis army, which had been reinforced up to 12 divisions and had also very powerful artillery, with some superiority in medium guns, and powerful armoured forces, was first brought to an abrupt standstill and then pressed slowly and steadily back with heavy losses of tanks and vehicles of all kinds. We are entitled to consider this last week's fighting as distinctly not unsatisfactory, especially when we compare it with what our position was two and a half months ago."

This, though we had not the knowledge at the time, was Rommel's last considerable assault. Thereafter the initiative passed to the Allies.

The Desert Army, under its new leaders, went over to the offensive in November, scoring the decisive victory of the Battle of Egypt. Rommel was routed. Three days after the announcement of this signal victory, which set the church bells ringing out at home, came the opening of the new operations at the western end of the Mediterranean. The name of Eisenhower was now added to the team in Africa and a new front to the war map, with the focal points at Algiers, Oran and Casablanca. It was not the front for which the Russians had been pleading, but it was another front, the Third Front as Winston called it. In his Lord Mayor's day speech that November, Winston could speak of "the end"—"Not the beginning of the end but the end of the beginning."

The launching of an Anglo-American offensive in North Africa had been under consideration by President and Prime Minister since the time of the United States entry into the war. Roosevelt was the sponsor of the operation and advocated it during Winston's first visit to Washington in December 1941. At that stage there were not men, munitions or transport enough. When, by mid-summer of 1942, it became evident that a second front in Europe was beyond Allied resources, it was decided to carry out the North African invasion.

Winston's journey to the Middle East had been concerned with the timing of events. For the success of the landings, it was imperative that enemy troops should be fully engaged elsewhere, so that reserves should not be available for transfer to the new front. Winston and the two British generals worked out a time-table and the Desert Army conformed magnificently with schedule. Rommel's forces in the East had been sent into headlong flight at the moment when to the West the Anglo-American Armada of over 500 transports, guarded by 350 ships of war, converged on the North African ports on November 8th. At Algiers, resistance by the French was not formidable. It was more determined at Oran but was overcome

within 48 hours. At Casablanca an attempted rising by Allied sympathizers was suppressed by the Vichy authorities, and there was some bitter fighting.

By November 11th the issue had been settled. An armistice had been arranged and Admiral Darlan, commander of Vichy's armed forces, then on a visit to North Africa, instructed the French in North Africa to cease resistance. That same day the Nazis rubbed out the rump of Vichy France and completed their occupation down to the Mediterranean. The remaining ships of the French navy at Toulon were scuttled by their crews, frustrating Hitler's hopes of stealing a fleet.

At Westminster on that 11th of November, the King opened a new session of Parliament, and the Prime Minister gave an account of the war's developments to the House of Commons.

This speech, with its inspiring record of achievement, was the real reply to the censure debate in July. Then Winston had been partially gagged by the need for secrecy. Now the event had vindicated the measures and the minister. Almost at the outset, Winston took up the tale back in June when Tobruk fell and he received news of the reverse from President Roosevelt. To the account he had previously given he was now able to add details that he had had, perforce, to suppress in July.

"On that dark day," he said, "when the news of the fall of Tobruk came in, I was with President Roosevelt in his room at the White House. The House knows how bitter a blow this was. But nothing could have exceeded the delicacy and kindness of our American friends and Allies. They had no thought but to help. Their very best tanks—the Shermans—were just coming out of the factories. The first batch had been newly placed in the hands of the divisions who had been waiting for them and looking forward to receiving them. The President took a large number of these tanks back from the troops to whom they had just been given. They were placed on board ship in the early days of July, and they sailed direct to Suez, under American escort for a considerable part of the voyage. The President also sent us a large number of self-propelled 105 mm. guns, which are most useful weapons for contending with the 88 mm. high velocity guns of which the Germans have made so much use. One ship in this convoy—this precious convoy—was sunk by a U-boat, but immediately, without being asked, the United States replaced it with another ship carrying an equal number of these weapons. All these tanks and high velocity guns played a recognizable part, indeed an important part, in General Alexander's battle."

"When I was in Egypt, in the early days of August, I visited myself every unit which was to be armed with these tanks and guns, some of them the most seasoned regiments we have, including the

Yeomanry Division. But, alas, they had no weapons adequate for the fight, and even those they had had been taken away from them in the stress of General Auchinleck's battle. I was able to tell those troops that the very finest weapons that existed would soon be in their possession; that these came direct from the President, and that, meanwhile, they must prepare themselves by every form of exercise and training for their use when they were delivered. That was at the beginning of August. But none of these units was ready to fight in the repulse of Rommel's attack in the second battle of Alamein, although all of them were ready for action by October 23rd when we began what I call the Battle of Egypt.

"Thus, you will see that the decision taken by the President on June 20th took four months to be operative, although the utmost energy and speed were used at each stage. Records were broken at every point in the unloading and fitting-up of the weapons and in their issue to the troops, but it was indispensable that the men should also have reasonable training in handling them. One may say, in fact, that between taking the decision for reinforcing the Middle East for a great operation and the reinforcements coming into action, a period of five months or even more has been required.

"Thus, before the vote of censure in the early days of July, all measures in our power had already been taken, first to repel the enemy's further assaults, and, secondly, to take decisive offensive action against him. See, then, how silly it is for people to imagine that Governments can act on impulse, or in immediate response to pressure, in these large-scale offensives. There must be planning, design and forethought, and after that a long period of silence, which looks—I can quite understand it—to the ordinary spectator as if it were simply apathy or inertia, but which is, in fact, steady, indispensable preparation for the blow. Moreover, you have first to get sufficient ascendancy even to prepare to strike such a blow.

"I am certainly not one of those who need to be prodded. In fact, if anything, I am a prod. My difficulties rather lie in finding the patience and self-restraint to wait through many anxious weeks for the results to be achieved. And because a Government cannot at every moment give an explanation of what it is doing and what is going on, it would be, and it will be, a great mistake to assume that nothing is being done. In my view, everything in human power was done, making allowance for the fallibility of human judgment. We re-created and revivified our war-battered Army, we placed a new Army at its side, and re-armed it on a gigantic scale. By these means we repaired the disaster which fell upon us; and converted the defence of Egypt into a successful attack."

Winston read to the House the directive he had given on August 10th to Alexander on taking over the command.

- 1.—*Your paramount duty will be to attack or destroy at the earliest opportunity the German-Italian army, commanded by Field Marshal Rommel, together with all its supplies and establishments in Egypt and Libya.*
- 2.—*You will discharge or cause to be discharged such other duties as appertain to your command without prejudice to the task described in Paragraph I which must be considered paramount in His Majesty's interests.*

"The general," Winston commented drily, "may very soon be sending along for further instructions."

Next there followed an account of the battles that gave us the victory, carrying on the tale from the point where he broke off in September. Winston as the chronicler of battles is the equal of the best historians. He tells the tale with such gusto. The House of Commons has never heard a finer military appreciation than his account of Rommel's rout.

"The narrowness of the passage between us and the Qattara Depression," Winston said, "which had proved so serviceable to us when we were resisting Rommel's attacks in both the defensive Battles of Alamein, became of course a most serious adverse factor to our advance when we ourselves were ready in our turn to assume the offensive. Our attack had to fit in harmoniously with the great operation in French North Africa to which it was a prelude. We had to wait till our troops were trained in the use of the new weapons which were arriving. We had to have a full moon on account of the method of attack. All these conditions were satisfiable around October 23rd.

"Meanwhile, however, we knew that the enemy was turning the position in front of us into a veritable fortress, blasting gunpits and trenches in the solid rock, laying enormous and elaborate minefields, and strengthening himself in every manner both by air and sea transport, in spite of the heavy toll exacted by our Air Force and our submarines. An attack by us round the enemy's Southern flank led into difficult country, with no threat to his communications. On the other hand, to blast a hole by frontal attack in the North by the sea was a most forbidding task.

"However, when I spent a night on August 19th with Generals Alexander and Montgomery in their desert headquarters, General Montgomery, with General Alexander's full assent, expounded in exact detail the first stages of the plan which has since in fact been carried out. It was an anxious matter. In the last war we devised the tank to clear a way for the infantry, who were otherwise held up by the intensity of machine-gun fire. On this occasion it was the infantry who would have to clear the way for the tanks, to break through the crust and liberate the superior armour. This they could only do in the moonlight, and for this they must be supported

with a concentration of artillery more powerful than any used in the present war.

"On a six-mile front of attack we had a 25-pounder gun, or better, every 23 yards. It is true that in the later barrages of 1918, at the Hindenburg Line, and other long-prepared positions, a concentration of one gun to every 15 yards was attained. But the field guns of those days were 18-pounders. Our 25-pounders are heavier, and we also believe they are the best field guns in the world.

"It was necessary to effect penetration of about 6,000 yards at the first stroke in order to get through the hostile minefields, trenches and batteries. In the last war it was nearly always possible to make this initial penetration. In those days, the artillery having blasted the gap, the next step was to gallop the cavalry through what was called the G in Gap. But this was never done, as the horsemen were soon brought to a standstill by the machine-gun posts in the rear. Horses were shot, and the whole possibility of exploiting the breach passed away. Times have changed, however. We have a steel machine cavalry now which, once a path is cleared through the mines and anti-tank guns, can certainly go forward against machine-gun posts to encounter whatever mobile forces of the enemy may lie beyond. That is the difference in this matter between the two wars.

"For the purpose of turning the breach to the fullest account, an entirely new Corps, the 10th, was formed, consisting of two British Armoured Divisions and the New Zealand Division—that 'ball of fire,' as it was described to me by those who had seen it at work. This very powerful force of between 40,000 and 50,000 men, including all the best tanks, the Grants and the Shermans, was withdrawn from the battle front immediately after Rommel's repulse in the second battle of Alamein, and devoted itself entirely to intensive training, exercises and preparation. It was this thunderbolt hurled through the gap which finished Rommel and his arrogant army. What has consummated Rommel's ruin is that he has had to make this ruinous and speedy retreat with a superior air force hammering and hampering him at every stage. The manner in which in this Egyptian campaign the arrangements between the air and the military have been perfected has given a model which should be followed in all combined operations in the future.

"It is true we had gathered superior forces, but all this would have been futile but for the masterly military conception of the commanders, the attention to detail which characterized their preparations, and the absolute ruthlessness with which their forces were engaged, not only at the point of rupture but in gripping the enemy along the entire battle front. This battle is, in fact, a very

fine example of the military art as developed under modern conditions. The skill of the commanders was rivalled by the conduct of their troops.

"Everyone testifies to the electrifying effect which the new Command had upon the Army. This noble Desert Army, which has never doubted its power to beat the enemy, and whose pride had suffered cruelly from retreats and disasters which they could not understand, regained in a week its ardour and self-confidence. Historians may explain Tobruk. The Eighth Army has done better—it has avenged it.

"From the moment that the seaward flank of the enemy was broken and the great mass of our armour flowed forward and successfully engaged the Panzer divisions, the fate of the Axis troops to the southward, amounting to six Italian divisions, largely motorized, was sealed. As our advance reached El Daba and later Fuka, their lines of supply and of retreat were equally severed. They were left in a waterless desert to perish or surrender. At Fuka a grim action was fought on a smaller scale, but with unexampled ardour on both sides, between the British armour and the remnants of the German Panzer Army. In this action, particularly, the British and Germans had it all to themselves. The Germans were almost entirely destroyed, only remnants escaping to Mersa Matruh, where again no halting-place was found.

"It is impossible to give a final estimate of the enemy's casualties. General Alexander's present estimate, which reached me late last night, is that 50,000 Germans and Italians have been killed, wounded or taken prisoner. Of these, 34,000 are Germans, and 25,000 Italians. Of course there are many more Italians who may be wandering about in the desert, and every effort is being made to bring them in. The enemy also lost irretrievably about 500 tanks and not fewer than 1,000 guns of all types from 47 mm. upwards. Our losses, though severe and painful, have not been unexpectedly high, having regard to the task our troops were called upon to face. They amount to 13,600 officers and men.

"The pursuit has now reached far to the West, and I cannot pretend to forecast where it will stop or what will be left of the enemy at the end of it. The speed of advance of our pursuing troops exceeds anything yet seen in the several ebbs and flows of the Libyan battlefields. Egypt is already clear of the enemy; we are advancing into Cyrenaica. Taken by itself, the Battle of Egypt must be regarded as an historic British victory. In order to celebrate it directions are being given to ring the bells throughout the land next Sunday morning, and I should think that many will listen to their peals with thankful hearts.

"But what was done by the Desert Army in the field was accomplished upon a far vaster scale here at home and in the United

States in the gigantic Anglo-American descent upon North Africa. Hitler knew that something was brewing, but what, he could not guess. He naively complained of 'military idiots' and drunkards—he is quite uncivil from time to time—the working of whose tortuous minds he and his staffs were unable to discern. In fact, however, while he was thus wondering, the largest amphibious operation ever conceived was about to sail for a strategic area of cardinal importance, which it reached without the slightest warning, and where the ships succeeded in making their landfall.

"To-day the news reaches us that Hitler has decided to overrun all France, thus breaking the Armistice which the Vichy Government had kept with such pitiful and perverted fidelity, and at such a horrible cost, even sacrificing their ships and sailors to fire upon American rescuing troops as they arrived. Even while they were doing that for the sake of the Armistice, they have been stricken down by their German task-masters. . . .

"I have now given to the House the best account I can, amid the press of events, of these remarkable transactions, which, I venture to hope, have already been highly beneficial to our interests and to our cause. We are entitled to rejoice only upon the condition that we do not relax. I always liked those lines by the American poet, Walt Whitman. I have several times repeated them. They apply to-day most aptly. He said :

. . . Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.

"The problems of victory are more agreeable than those of defeat, but they are no less difficult."

Before November had run its course, Winston was able to report that the Anglo-American descent upon North Africa had been crowned with astonishing success. "A majestic enterprise," he termed it

"To transport these large armies of several hundred thousand men with all their intricate, elaborate modern apparatus secretly across the seas and oceans and to strike at the hour and almost to the minute simultaneously at a dozen points in spite of the U-boats and all the chances of the weather was a feat of organization which will long be studied with respect. As to the U-boats, they had been evaded and brushed aside. For every Allied transport sunk, an enemy submarine was sunk or damaged. For every ton of Allied shipping lost on the expedition, two tons were gained in the French harbours of North Africa—So, as Napoleon recommended, war was made to support war."

For the Allies 1942 was the crucial year of the war. In its

opening months, enemy fortunes were at their peak. By its close the decline had set in. In the Far East the Japanese were held on land and their fleet had suffered severe losses off the Solomons in engagements with the Americans. In Russia, despite Hitler's boasts, the battle of Stalingrad was ending in a catastrophe for the Nazis. In Africa, Tobruk, Sollum, Bardia had been retaken. Rommel, midsummer menace to Egypt, was a fugitive pursued by Montgomery a thousand miles away. Yet further to the west the other prong of the Allied pincers was closing in on Tunisia, though there was a hard shell of resistance still to be cracked.

The changing face of war was mirrored in Winston's fortunes. In the spring he had met and survived successive crises. As 1942 was added to its predecessors, the crises were behind him. Success in the field had vindicated the central direction of the war that the critics had maligned.

Early in 1943 there was a new Anglo-American descent upon North Africa, and President and Prime Minister met at the Moroccan port of Casablanca. It was the unconditional surrender conference.

The North Africa expedition was the President's particular contribution to Allied strategy. Now that it was being triumphantly executed, he undertook the Atlantic crossing to assist in the solution of the problems that success had brought in its train. Among them were the delicate questions of relations with the French. Eisenhower had caused political complications by dealing with the notorious Darlan, thereby inspiring an angry protest from the de Gaullites in London. On the eve of Christmas, this cause of vexation was removed by the assassin who put an end to Darlan's equivocal career.

Criticism of Eisenhower for making use of Darlan was not confined to the de Gaullists. Left Wing circles, both in this country and the United States, felt themselves to be outraged by this vicarious contamination with a former instrument of Vichy. The Allied leaders were more robust in their consciences. Winston put the matter in perspective. "Some people," he said, "are busily concerned about the past records of various French functionaries whom the Americans have deemed it expedient to employ. For my part I must confess I am more interested in the safety of armies and in the success of the operations. I shall therefore not take up the time of the House with the tales that can be told of how these various Frenchmen acted in the forlorn and hideous situation in which they found themselves when their country collapsed. What matters to Eisenhower and to our troops, who in great numbers are serving under him, is first and foremost a tranquil countryside and second secure and unimpeded communications."

In addition to the Darlan question there was the delicate problem of Giraud and de Gaulle—the one head of French admin-

istration in North Africa, and the other head of the French National Committee in London. It required patience and diplomacy to bring about a meeting between the two leaders of Free Frenchmen. Eventually the ice was broken, though ice of that frigidity was not to be melted in a day. The communiqué in which the Generals recorded their achievement did not radiate cordiality. "We have met," they stated, "we have talked. We have registered our entire agreement on the end to be achieved which is the liberation of France and the triumph of human liberties by the total defeat of the enemy. This end will be attained by the union in war of all Frenchmen fighting side by side with their Allies." Somehow the union of Free Frenchmen never embraced the unity of the two Generals.

It was a matter of regret to President and Prime Minister that Premier Stalin had not found it possible to leave his headquarters in the Kremlin to be present with them at the Casablanca conference. Roosevelt, despite his physical disability, had been prepared to travel as far west as Khartoum if thereby a meeting of the three leaders could have been arranged. But the Soviet Premier, himself directing the Red Army's winter offensive, did not feel that he could leave his post even for a single day. Though he was absent, the needs of Russia were not lost sight of. Prime Minister and President urged upon their chiefs of staff to bring British and American forces into action with the utmost speed as a means of relieving the Red Armies from some of the weight of the enemy attack. "In approving schemes and allocation of forces," said Winston, "we asked for more weight to be put into the attacks and more speed into the dates."

The Casablanca Conference opened on January 4th (it was not until twelve days afterwards when the proceedings had been concluded that the news was made public), and for the next ten days the combined Allied Staffs were in constant session. The entire field of the war was surveyed theatre by theatre. "Nothing like this prolonged discussion between two Allies has ever taken place before," the official communiqué recorded. Winston had been pressing for the meeting for some time, for with so many theatres of war making simultaneous demands for men and munitions, there were bound to be divergences of view as to which should be given priority and which should suffer delay. These divergences were to be removed only by "the association of consenting and instructed minds," and removed they were. Complete agreement was reached and, before separating, President, Prime Minister and Combined Staffs had drawn up their military programmes for 1943.

One important question on which consenting and instructed minds reached agreement was the delicate question of the command of the Allied armies. While yet hundreds of miles of desert separ-

ated the forces of Alexander and Eisenhower, they could operate independently. The agreed boundary between the two military spheres was the frontier between Tripolitania and Tunisia. As the Desert Army drove Rommel back upon Tunisia co-ordination between the two prongs of the closing pincers was imperative. So it was agreed that when the Desert Army should pass into the American sphere it should come under the orders of Eisenhower.

"I have great confidence in Gen. Eisenhower," said Winston when he informed the House of the decision. "I regard him as one of the finest men I have ever met. It was arranged at Casablanca that when this transfer of the Desert Army took place, Gen. Alexander should become deputy Commander-in-Chief under Eisenhower. At the same time Air Chief-Marshal Tedder became Air Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, responsible to Gen. Eisenhower for all the air operations in this theatre." At the same time it was agreed that Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham (later First Sea Lord) should take over the naval command (*pace* Il Duce) of the entire Mediterranean.

Thus the Eisenhower-Tedder-Montgomery team came into existence, formed at the very outset of the combined campaigns. In World War the First, it required the reverses of four years' fighting to bring about the appointment of Foch as Allied Generalissimo.

When Winston gave his account of these arrangements (speech to the Commons, February 11th, 1943) he dwelt with justifiable pride on the setting up of this hierarchy "completely in accord with modern ideas of unity of command between various Allies, and of the closest concert of the three services." He made an appeal to the House, the Press and the country to be careful not to criticize the arrangement. "If they do," he said, "I trust it will not be on personal lines, to run one general against another, to the detriment of the smooth and harmonious relations which now prevail among this band of brothers who have got their teeth into the job. In Gen. Eisenhower, as in Gen. Alexander, you have two men remarkable for selflessness of character and disdain of purely personal advancement. Let them alone, give them a chance, and it is quite possible that one of these fine days the bells will have to be rung again."

This appeal was honoured by the House, the Press and the country. The harmony between the band of military brothers was not disturbed.

The final decision of the Casablanca conference, not mentioned in the official communiqué, was announced by President Roosevelt when he met Press correspondents. In his January message to Congress, a few days before setting out for Casablanca, he had emphasized the world's need for lasting peace The Axis must be disarmed

and kept disarmed ; they were predatory beasts, and if their teeth were not drawn they would be at the world's throat once more within a short generation.

The disarming of the Axis Powers and the stamping out of the poison of their philosophies was discussed at length at Casablanca. Peace, the President told Press correspondents afterwards at Algiers, could be brought about only by the complete elimination of Japanese and German military power. He recalled that the American General Grant had been nicknamed "unconditional surrender" Grant. Germany, Italy and Japan would be required to make unconditional surrender, and in view of this decision, he suggested that Casablanca should be known as the Unconditional Surrender Conference.

When this matter of surrender was before the conference, Winston drew attention to the position that would arise on the defeat of the enemy in Europe. With the authority of the War Cabinet he reiterated the declaration he had previously made that thereupon Britain would continue the war by the side of the United States until surrender had been forced upon Japan. He offered to make the pledge in any form that might be desired, even embodying it in a treaty if that were thought to be advantageous. President Roosevelt replied that he considered this to be unnecessary ; the word of Britain was good enough for him.

The conference over, the Prime Minister set out eastwards again to visit Turkey, arriving by air at Adana (January 30th), where he was received by President Ineunu. Of the remaining neutral countries, Turkey had greatest cause for relief at the improvement in the Allied situation. For two years she had been precariously placed—bound by alliance to Britain, expecting to become a battle-ground as the Germans developed their push to the East. In the last war the Turks had been on the losing side and they did not intend to back the wrong horse for a second time.

The visit of the Prime Minister as guest of the Government was a token of their renewed confidence in Allied prospects. The cordial terms of the communiqué issued after the visit gave rise to expectations in some quarters that the Turks might abandon the fence of neutrality. This, however, was not in contemplation at that stage, as Winston informed the House in his report (February 11th, 1943), in which he uttered a caution against reading anything into the communiqué. "It is no part of our policy to get Turkey into trouble," he said. "On the contrary, a disaster to Turkey would be a disaster to Britain and to all the United Nations. Hitherto Turkey has maintained a solid barrier against aggression from any quarter, and by so doing, even in the darkest days, has rendered us invaluable service in preventing the spreading of the war through Turkey into Persia and Iraq and in preventing the

"menace to the oilfields of Abadan, which are of vital consequence to the whole western war"

Winston's travels were not yet over. From Turkey he returned to Cairo for a conference with Service Chiefs. He found the Egyptians jubilant that their fertile lands of the Nile had been delivered from the horrors of invasion. He was handed a specimen of a medal the enemy had struck to commemorate the capture of Cairo—alas for the vanity of Nazi hopes! Next he crossed to Cyprus to be given a hearty welcome by the notables of the island. Then he flew to Tripoli, landing on Castel Benito aerodrome (February 3rd), where he was mobbed by enthusiastic troops. Tripoli was the first Italian city to be delivered by British arms from the grip of the Germans, and Winston was for once embarrassed when he found himself the object of super-effusive demonstrations from Italians who greeted him as their liberator.

Delaying his return to spend a few hours with the troops, Winston reviewed two of the forward divisions—the 51st (Highland) Division and the New Zealanders. He praised them for their achievements, speaking almost with envy of their tremendous experiences. In the words of the old hymn, he told them they had "nightly pitched your moving tanks a day's march nearer home." After the war, he assured them, when a man is asked what he did, it would be sufficient to make the reply, "I marched and fought with the Desert Army."

These were amongst Winston's most prized hours, and they furnished him with some fine descriptive material when he came to report to the House on his tour. "I have never in my life," he told Members, "which from my youth up has been connected with military matters, seen troops who march with the style and air of those in the Desert Army. Talk about spit and polish! The Highland and New Zealand Divisions paraded after their immense ordeal in the desert as if they had come out of Wellington Barracks. There was an air on the face of every private of that just and solemn pride which comes from dear-bought victory and triumph after toil. I saw the same sort of marching smartness and the same punctilio of saluting and discipline in the Russian guard of honour who received me in Moscow ten months ago. The fighting men of democracy feel that they are coming into their own."

He paid tribute to the Commanders—to Alexander, on whom the over-riding responsibility lay, and to Montgomery—"this vehement and formidable general, a Cromwellian figure, austere, severe, accomplished, tireless, his life given to the study of war, who has attracted to himself in an extraordinary measure the confidence and devotion of the Army." Alexander had applied to him for a new directive to supersede his original instructions.

There must have been great delight in the Signals when the request went through :

To PRIME MINISTER—FROM GENERAL ALEXANDER :

*Sir, the orders you gave me on Aug. 15th, 1942, have been fulfilled. His Majesty's enemies, together with their impedimenta, have been completely eliminated from Egypt, Cyrenaica, Libya and Tripolitania. I now await your further instructions.*

By then the Allied pincers were closing irresistibly upon the Germans in North Africa. From point to point they were driven back from the Mareth line through the Gabes gap. The Eighth Army, after the victory of Akarit, made contact with the second U.S. Army Corps advancing from Gafsa. The men of the Eighth swept on past Sfax (April 10th) and took Enfidaville (April 21st). On May 6th the final offensive in Africa was launched, Tunis and Bizerta were captured, and the last stand of the demoralized enemy in Cape Bon was brought to an end on May 12th.

Winston was on his travels once again, so that the privilege of announcing the victory to the House of Commons fell to Clement Attlee. Each House carried a motion of congratulation to the forces who had inflicted this crushing defeat on the enemy. Wardlaw-Milne, speaking in the debate, congratulated the Prime Minister on his part in the victory. "Mr. Churchill," he said, "probably for the first time, now saw the beginning of the reward for the great burden he had borne."

Winston had journeyed to America to meet the President once again and complete the planning of the next discomfiture for the Axis. In Washington he received a cordial message from the King voicing the nation's congratulations. "Now that the Campaign in Africa has reached a glorious conclusion," his Majesty wrote, "I wish to tell you how profoundly I appreciate the fact that its initial conception and successful prosecution are largely due to your vision and your unflinching determination in the face of early difficulties. The Africa campaign has immeasurably increased the debt that this country and indeed all the United Nations owe to you."

To this message the Prime Minister replied : "I am deeply grateful for the most gracious message with which your Majesty has honoured me. No minister of the Crown has ever received more kindness and confidence from his Sovereign than I have during the three fateful years which have passed since I received your Majesty's commission to form a National Administration. This has been a precious aid and comfort to me, especially in the dark time through which we have passed. My father and my grandfather both served in Cabinets in Queen Victoria's reign and I myself have been a Minister under your Majesty's grandfather,

your father and yourself for many years. The signal compliment which your Majesty has paid me on this occasion goes far beyond my deserts but will remain a lively source of pleasure to me as long as I live."

It was to the United States Congress that the Prime Minister gave his account of the winding-up of the Africa campaign when, for the second time, he addressed the American legislators on June 8th.<sup>1</sup> One point he emphasized was the advantage which had accrued to the Allies from the prolongation of the campaign. Victory had been more crushing, though it was not precisely according to plan. When the Allies landed, French Tunisia was not in German occupation, and it had been hoped that the whole of French North-West Africa would be ours after the initial landing had been accomplished. French resistance, however, had been sufficiently prolonged to derange the time-table, and the Germans seized the chance to push troops over the Sicilian Narrows into Tunisia. For some days it was touch and go, but Axis lines of communication were shorter and von Arnim was able to establish his hold. This brought an infinitely larger haul of prisoners into the final bag.

It was fitting that Winston should have been in Washington at the moment when victory crowned the enterprise. His reception wiped out his memories of the day twelve months before when he had received from Roosevelt the melancholy news of the fall of Tobruk. In his speech to Congress he said :

"We have certainly a most encouraging example here of what can be achieved by British and Americans working together heart and hand. In fact one might almost feel that if they could keep it up there is hardly anything that they could not do, either in the field of war or in the not less tangled problems of peace.

"History will acclaim this great enterprise as a classic example of the way to make war. We used the weapon of sea power, the weapon in which we were strongest, to attack the enemy at our chosen moment and at our chosen point. In spite of the immense elaboration of the plan, and of the many hundreds, thousands even, who had to be informed of its main outlines, we maintained secrecy and effected surprise.

"We confronted the enemy with a situation in which he had either to lose invaluable strategical territories, or to fight under conditions most costly and wasteful to him. We recovered the initiative, which we still retain. We rallied to our side French forces, which are already a brave and will presently become a powerful army under the gallant Gen. Giraud. We secured bases from which violent attacks can and will be delivered by our air power on the whole of Italy, with results no one can measure.

<sup>1</sup> See also page 460.

"We have made an economy in our strained and straitened shipping position worth several hundreds of great ships, and one which will give us the advantage of far swifter passage through the Mediterranean to the East, to the Middle East, and to the Far East. We have struck the enemy a blow which is the equal of Stalingrad, and most stimulating to our heroic and heavily engaged Russian Allies. All this gives the lie to the Nazi and Fascist taunt that the Parliamentary democracies are incapable of waging effective war. Presently we shall furnish them with further examples.

"Still, I am free to admit that in North Africa we builded better than we knew. The unexpected came to the aid of the design and multiplied the results. For this we have to thank the military intuition of Corporal Hitler. We may notice, as I predicted in the House of Commons three months ago, the touch of the master-hand. The same insensate obstinacy which condemned Field-Marshal von Paulus and his army to destruction at Stalingrad has brought this new catastrophe upon our enemies in Tunisia.

"We have destroyed or captured considerably more than a quarter of a million of the enemy's best troops, together with vast masses of material, all of which had been ferried across to Africa after paying a heavy toll to British submarines and British and United States aircraft. No one could count on such follies. They gave us, if I may use the language of finance, a handsome bonus after the full dividend had been earned and paid.

"At the time when we planned this great joint African operation, we hoped to be masters of Tunisia even before the end of last year; but the injury we have now inflicted upon the enemy, physical and psychological, and the training our troops have obtained in the hard school of war, and the welding together of the Anglo-American Staff machine—these are advantages which far exceed anything which it was in our power to plan. The German lie-factory is volubly explaining how valuable is the time which they bought by the loss of their great armies. Let them not delude themselves. Other operations which will unfold in due course, depending as they do upon the special instruction of large numbers of troops and upon the provision of a vast mass of technical apparatus, these other operations have not been in any way delayed by the obstinate fighting in Northern Tunisia.

"Mr. President, the African war is over. Mussolini's African Empire and Corporal Hitler's strategy are alike exploded. It is interesting to compute what these performances have cost these two wicked men and those who have been their tools or their dupes. The Emperor of Abyssinia sits again upon the throne from which he was driven by Mussolini's poison-gas. All the vast territories from Madagascar to Morocco, from Cairo to Casablanca, from

Aden to Dakar, are under British, American, or French control. One continent at least has been cleansed and purged for ever from Fascist or Nazi tyranny.

"The African excursions of the two Dictators have cost their countries in killed and captured 950,000 soldiers. In addition, nearly 2,400,000 gross tons of shipping have been sunk and nearly 8,000 aircraft destroyed, both of these figures being exclusive of large numbers of ships and aircraft damaged. There have also been lost to the enemy 6,200 guns, 2,550 tanks and 70,000 trucks, which is the American name for lorries, and which, I understand, has been adopted by the combined staffs in North-West Africa in exchange for the use of the word petrol in place of gasoline.

"These are the losses of the enemy in three years of war, and at the end of it all what is it that they have to show? The proud German Army has by its sudden collapse, sudden crumbling and breaking up, unexpected to all of us, the proud German Army has once again proved the truth of the saying 'The Hun is always either at your throat or your feet'; and that is a point which may have its bearing upon the future. But for us, arrived at this milestone in the war, we can say—'One Continent redeemed.' "

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Planning for Peace*

THE turning of the tide of war brought a quickening of interest in political issues. As the nation's peril receded, back-benchers considered that they could safely indulge themselves. On questions arising from the war national unity continued. But in home affairs the year 1943 was marked by a growing spirit of independence at Westminster, a re-emergence of peacetime party spirits. Back-benchers, who for months had observed a self-denying ordinance, were inclined to Arthur Greenwood's view that we could stand "a good deal of hammer-and-tongs controversy in the House without impairing the national spirit of unity of will for the purpose of winning the war."

It was a sign of the times that in a ministerial reconstruction Stafford Cripps could be assigned a departmental post involving his exclusion from the War Cabinet without protest being made. As Minister of the Crown, he had failed to retain the hold on public popularity that had been his when he returned from Moscow. As Leader of the House, he had caused murmurings for rebuking Members who had trooped out of the chamber while the Prime

Minister was speaking. Amongst Conservatives, to whom a Left Winger as Leader had scarcely been a choice to enthuse over, there was relief when it was announced that Anthony Eden was to succeed him. If Labour Members felt any resentment over the change, they concealed it with exemplary discretion. At the Prime Minister's request, Stafford Cripps took the post of Minister of Aircraft Production, and with it chairmanship of a new Radio Board. In urging him to undertake these duties, Winston wrote that production of aircraft and development of radio technique lay at the very heart of our affairs.

As to the question of ministerial status, Winston suggested that "although it might at first sight seem that by leaving your present post for a great administrative department, you would be stepping down in the political hierarchy, I know you would not be influenced by that." Herein the Prime Minister judged correctly. Cripps is not one of those politicians whose patriotism is subject to personal punctilio. His services, he replied, were entirely at the disposal of the country and the Prime Minister was the best judge of how best they could be utilized. He readily agreed to relinquish his seat in the War Cabinet ; indeed he considered it would be inappropriate for him to retain it in his new job.

Tadpole and Toper did not let the occasion pass. They had ceased to regard Cripps as a possible alternative as head of the Government—indeed by now they abandoned the idea of supplanting Winston. All the same, muck is natural for some minds and the whisper went the rounds that there was more than met the eye in what they emphasized as the "demotion" of Stafford Cripps. True, he might accompany the Prime Minister on a visit to the Home Fleet—that was camouflage. In fact, said the whisperers, Winston and Stafford were at variance over the central direction of the war ; Stafford was too independent for the Prime Minister and so he was demoted.

The vacancy in the War Cabinet was filled by the advancement of Herbert Morrison. The office of Lord Privy Seal was taken over by Lord Cranborne, Leader of the House of Lords.

The Prime Minister also decided on the creation of a new post —Minister Resident at Allied H.Q. in North Africa, to which Mr. Harold Macmillan was appointed. This innovation resulted from the uneasy state of our political relations with the Fighting French, to which the uneasy relations between Gen. de Gaulle and Gen. Giraud contributed. In Left-Wing circles the Darlan incident was still being brooded over. Aneurin Bevan tabled a motion declaring it to be inconsistent with the ideals for which we were fighting that the Allies should have had relations with Darlan and his kind. The motion was not debated, but concern over the political set-up in North Africa was such that a secret session was held to

give the members in private a statement, held to be undesirable in public, of the Government's views. Until the French Generals had composed their differences, Algiers was a danger spot—a happy hunting-ground for the political trouble-makers, a potential source of discord between the Fighting French and the Allies.

There is a robust optimism about your politicians that must always be the envy of the common man. At the close of 1942 the fortunes of war were on the turn. The Nazis were on the run in Africa, their retreat had begun in Russia. But the Continent was still under their domination from Cape North to the Mediterranean. The Prime Minister and his colleagues were still bending all their energies to the preparation of the victory campaigns. In the factories, the workers were toiling to turn out the machines and munitions of war. At Westminster, back-benchers, unburdened by responsibilities of the present, leaped ahead to the future and became agitated about problems of the peace. In the debate on the Address in November, 1942, Arthur Greenwood, as Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, reproached the Government for its timidity in facing the difficulties that peace would bring.

Throughout the session that followed Parliament was to give its major attention to the post-war planning. Winston and his colleagues, despite the preoccupations of the war, were concerned to prepare the essential measures for peace. First place among the long-term plans for the return of peace was taken by the scheme for extending the social services that became known by the name of its author, as the Beveridge plan. Arthur Greenwood, during his term as Minister (without Portfolio), had called Sir William Beveridge from his backwater at Oxford to report on the further development of state insurance. The choice of the Master of University College was not unconnected with the fact that years before Sir William had been associated with Winston Churchill in the launching of unemployment insurance. It was Winston who had first enlisted him in the public service.

The Beveridge report, published on December 4th, 1942, was the result of the investigation Sir William made as Chairman of a Committee of Civil Servants. The Committee assisted him in his examination but insisted, with proper regard for Civil Service impartiality, on disclaiming responsibility for the conclusions reached. The report, accordingly, was the Chairman's own. Few Government papers have achieved so great a popularity. It became a best seller in a day and its author the man of the moment, fame which suffered an eclipse when he stepped down from a position seemingly above party, to enter the political arena as a Liberal. Since then, though the scheme has remained, the name of its author has been less frequently invoked by members of other parties.

The Beveridge plan became for the time the focus of all hopes,

or, at least, of all uncritical hopes. The more critical, counting the cost, asked where the £858,000,000 a year was to come from. To this the uncritical replied in the words of Arthur Greenwood, "£ s. d. have become meaningless symbols." The demand was general for the plan, the whole plan and nothing but the plan. In the House there were protests from Socialist back-benchers because the Government did not pledge itself forthwith to accept Beveridge without qualification. Herbert Morrison, as closing speaker in the debate, said the Government had rejected only one of the twenty-three Beveridge proposals ; of the others, sixteen had been accepted and six left open for further consideration. This did not satisfy the critics, and in the division 121 votes were registered against the Government.

Winston had not taken part in the Beveridge report debate ; he was recovering from the first of his three attacks of pneumonia. He made his views known in a broadcast in which he outlined his Four Years Plan for after the war. The speech was notable in that it was concerned solely with the problems of peace. Turning aside from the preoccupations of battle, he dealt with the domestic scene in the hope, as he said, that he might simplify and mollify political divergences.

The public mind was then exercised on the Beveridge Plan. There were doubts as to whether the Government was in earnest about putting the scheme into operation. The view was fostered that while Socialist members were 100 per cent in support of Beveridge and the millennium, Conservative Ministers were lukewarm if not hostile.

Winston, at the outset of his speech, bade his listeners beware of attempts to over-persuade or even coerce the Government to bind themselves, or their successors, to impose great new expenditure on the state. Nothing would be easier than to make any number of glowing promises and receive the immediate response of cheap cheers and glowing leading articles, but, he proclaimed, "I am not in any need to go about making promises to win political support or to be allowed to continue in office."

Though he would give no such pledges for the future, he had his vision of how the people should maintain and progressively improve their standards of life and labour. "I am very much attracted by the idea that we should make and proclaim what might be called a Four Years Plan." Why four years ? Because this term seemed to be the appropriate period for transition and reconstruction after the fall of Hitler.

So he passed on to Beveridge. "I personally am very keen that a scheme for the amalgamation and extension of our present incomparable insurance system should have a leading place in our Four Years Plan. I have been prominently connected with all these

schemes of national compulsory organized thrift from the time when I brought my friend Sir William Beveridge into the public service 35 years ago when I was creating the labour exchanges, on which he was a great authority, and when I framed the first unemployment insurance scheme. The prime parent of all our national insurance schemes is Mr. Lloyd George. I was his lieutenant in all those distant days and afterwards it fell to me, as Chancellor of the Exchequer eighteen years ago, to lower the pensions age to 65 and to bring in widows and orphans. The time is now ripe for another great advance.

"Anyone can see what large savings there will be in the administration once the whole process of insurance has become unified, compulsory and national. There is a real opportunity for what I once called 'bringing the magic of averages to the rescue of millions.' Therefore you must rank me and my colleagues as strong partisans of national compulsory insurance for all classes for all purposes from the cradle to the grave.

"Here let me remark that the best way to insure against unemployment is to have no unemployment. There is another point. Unemployables, rich or poor, will have to be toned up. We cannot afford to have idle people. Idlers at the top make idlers at the bottom. No-one must stand aside in his working prime to pursue a life of selfish pleasure. There are wasters in all classes. Happily they are only a small minority in every class. We cannot have a band of drones in our midst, whether they come from the ancient aristocracy, the modern plutocracy or the ordinary type of pub-crawler."

Other large matters would need to be dealt with in the Four Years Plan. In the first place there was British agriculture. Abundant food had brought 47,000,000 Britons into the world—"here they are and they must find their living." It was absolutely certain that we should have to grow a larger proportion of our food at home. If British agriculture were to be expanded and improved and if a reasonable level of prices were to be maintained ("as it must be maintained") there were substantial changes which the state must be prepared to shoulder.

Next there was the spacious domain of public health. "Here let me say that there is no finer investment for any community than putting milk into babies." If Britain were to keep its high place in the leadership of the world, larger families must be encouraged. Following on health and welfare was education. Facilities should be evened out and multiplied. After school-time indeed, we must not throw our youth, uncared for and unsupervised, on to the labour market with its blind alley occupations "which start so fair and often end so foul."

All could not reach the same level but all must have their chance. He looked forward to a Britain so big that she would need to draw

her leaders from every type of school and wearing every type of tie.

On the subject of finance, Winston said he must sound a note of warning, referring in particular to Arthur Greenwood's recent "meaningless symbols" speech. "A friend of mine said in the House of Commons the other day that pounds, shillings and pence are meaningless symbols ! This made me open my eyes. What then are we to say about the savings of the people ? . . . The savings of the nation arising from the thrift, skill, and devotion of individuals are sacred. The state is built around them and it is the duty of the state to redeem its faith in an equal degree of value. I am not one of those who are wedded to undue rigidity in the management of the currency system but this I say : Over a period of ten or fifteen years there ought to be a fair, steady continuity of values if there is to be any faith between man and man and between the individual and the state who have successfully stabilized prices during the war. We intend to continue this policy after the war to the best of our ability."

Concluding his survey, Winston said that he had given both caution and encouragement for the future. "If," he added, "I have to strike a balance, as I must do before the end, let me proclaim myself a follower of the larger hope. It is my solemn belief that if we act with comradeship and loyalty to our country and one another, if we can make state enterprise and free enterprise both serve national interests and pull the national wagon side by side, then there is no need for us to run into that horrible devastating slump and into that squalid epoch of bickering and confusion which mocked and squandered the hard-won victory we gained a quarter of a century ago."

Winston's ideas for the post-war years gave rise to speculation about the ministerial team that was going to put these massive schemes into operation. Since ministers of all parties were engaged on planning ahead in so much detail, did it not mean that they contemplated working together to meet the difficulties of peace as they were mastering the perils of war ? There was careful scrutiny of the words Winston used—"when this (Four Years) Plan has been shaped, it will have to be presented to the country either by a National Government formally representative, as this one is, of the three parties in the state, or by a National Government comprising the best men in all parties who are willing to serve. I cannot tell how these matters will settle themselves. But in 1944 our present Parliament will have lived nine years, and by 1945 ten years, and as soon as the defeat of Germany has removed the danger now at our throats, and the register can be compiled and other necessary arrangements made, a new House of Commons must be chosen by the electorate, including of course the armed forces wherever they may be."

By no party were these conceptions of the future given more anxious scrutiny than by the Socialists. Back-benchers of the party were concerned not with the merits of the plan as with the future of the Ministers. The political truce, though faithfully observed, was irksome. Its extension into the days of peace was not to be tolerated and yet it appeared almost as if their leaders in the Ministry, planning now for post-war times, might be engaging themselves to continue the Coalition indefinitely. Emmanuel Shinwell put a direct question in the House to the Prime Minister. Did the broadcast statement, he asked, about a Four Years Plan, based on a Coalition Ministry, represent the policy of the Government? To this the Prime Minister replied : "The answer about a Four Years Plan is in the affirmative, but whether it will be put forward by a Coalition Government or not depends on what the various parties decide to do." From this it was inferential that Messrs. Attlee, Bevin and Morrison had so far entered into no arrangement for a four years' coalition for the Four Years Plan. To make assurances sure on this point, the Socialist leaders were cross-questioned at the next meeting of the Parliamentary party. Clement Attlee specifically stated that he and his fellow ministers had made no arrangements. They were instructed not to enter into any binding commitments about the future. The Socialists were resolved to break with their war-time political associates the moment the military situation should permit.

There is no question that the Prime Minister favoured the continuance of the Coalition Government to undertake the tasks of peace. Among the men of his time—and that is equivalent to two parliamentary generations—he has stood out as a party man. Yet, curiously enough, no parliamentarian has been more disposed to enter into arrangements with the other side. Here perhaps you may see the influence of Lloyd George. Even before the last war, in the days when political affairs were in a state of perpetual crisis, when civil war was threatening over Ireland and when the world war was imminent, Lloyd George and Churchill were disposed to come to terms with the Opposition and approaches to the Conservatives were made, though they came to naught. It is the verdict of history that Britain hates Coalitions, but experience of Coalition ministers in two wars has proved the advantage of sinking party differences and co-operating for the national good in time of emergency.

In the privacy of their minds, several of the Prime Minister's Socialist colleagues doubtless shared his wish to go on together<sup>1</sup> but the party view was otherwise. Winston made his position clear in a speech to the House on the coal situation (December 13th,

<sup>1</sup> When the break came, it was stated that Mr A. V. Alexander expressed himself against breaking up the Coalition

1943). A demand had been made for nationalization of the mines and Winston was giving the Government's decision against it. He could not, he said, be responsible for undertaking this great change in time of war because he considered that it would need to be ratified or preceded by a national mandate. He went on :

"Let us see what will happen at the end of the war. It is very difficult indeed to pierce the veil of the future. However, the following seems to stand out very plainly. Either there will be agreement between the parties or there will be a general election on party lines. At the present time the latter looks the more probable. In time of war or great public stress or danger, a National Coalition with all parties officially represented in it as parties, not as individuals, gives great strength and unity to the country, as it is doing now. Anyone, or any body of men who succeeded in breaking it up in time of war would, I am sure, receive the censure of the vast majority of the people. But in time of peace conditions are different. Party government is not obnoxious to democracy. Indeed Parliamentary government has flourished under party government.

"I earnestly hope it may be possible to preserve national unity after the war. But I say quite frankly that I should not be alarmed for the future of this country if we had to return to party government. We may have to do that. But this I will say—and the House will pardon me, I am sure, for saying it—that whatever differences, bitternesses or party fighting may have to take place among us, each representing our constituencies and our convictions, things can never be quite the same again. Friendships have been established and ties have been made between the two parties, minglings have taken place, understandings have been established which, without any prejudice to each man's public duty, will undoubtedly have a mellowing effect on a great deal of our relations in the future. For my part I must say that I feel I owe a great debt to the Labour Party who were a most stalwart support to me at the time when I first undertook the burdens I am still being permitted to bear."

When the time came, Winston was to be disappointed in his earnest hope. It was not found possible to preserve national unity when the war in Europe was over. The party fight was resumed and party government means that the able men on one side or the other—roughly you may say half the ablest men in political life—are debarred for a term from taking a hand in the government of the country. At the end of the term, it is more than likely that the political pendulum will swing the other half out of office. The loss of the services of half its ablest men is the price the country has to pay for party government. But though we may have to put up with some second-raters in our Governments, we are saved from a perpetual ministry of all the talents which, under the corrupting

Influence of power, would turn into an unescapable dictatorship. So sacrificing the ministerial best, we escape the ministerial worst.

In another speech in the House (October 28th) Winston discussed some of the features of Parliamentary democracy. He was moving the appointment of a Select Committee to report upon the rebuilding of the House of Commons, destroyed on May 10th, 1941, by one of the last bombs of the last serious piloted raid on London. Since that time, M.P.s had found alternative accommodation, first at Church House, Westminster, meeting-place of the parsons, and later in the Upper House which the peers had placed at the disposal of the Commons.

From time to time in the past there had been criticisms of the old Chamber and its inconveniences, in particular of the fact that it was not large enough to accommodate a full House of members as is shown by the overcrowding on Parliamentary occasions. Nevertheless the Prime Minister, on behalf of the Government, advised his fellow members that the Chamber should be rebuilt on its old foundations, which were intact, and in principle within its old dimensions, utilizing as far as possible the shattered walls.

"We shape our dwellings and afterwards our buildings shape us," Winston began, epigrammatically. "Having dwelt and served for more than forty years in the late chamber and having derived very great pleasure and advantage therefrom, I should naturally like to see it restored in all essentials to its old form, convenience and dignity."

Two main characteristics of the old House commanded the approval and support of reflecting and experienced members. The first was that its shape was oblong and not semi-circular. This was a very potent factor in our political life. The semi-circular assembly, which appealed to political theorists, enabled every individual or every group to move round the centre, adopting various shades of pink as the weather changed. "I am," said the Prime Minister, "a convinced supporter of the party system in preference to the group system. I have seen many earnest and ardent Parliaments destroyed by the group system. The party system is much favoured by the oblong form of chamber. It is easy for an individual to move through those insensible gradations from left to right, but the act of crossing the floor is one that requires serious consideration. I am well informed on the matter for I have accomplished that difficult process not only once but twice.

"The second characteristic of a chamber formed on the lines of the House of Commons is that it should not be big enough to contain all its members at once without overcrowding, and that there should be no question of every member having a separate seat reserved for him. The reason for this has long been a puzzle to uninstructed outsiders and has frequently excited the curiosity and even the

criticism of new members. Yet it is not so difficult to understand if you look at it from a practical point of view. If the House is big enough to contain all its members, nine-tenths of its debates will be conducted in the depressing atmosphere of an almost empty or half-empty chamber."

The essence of good House of Commons speaking was the conversational style, the facility for quiet, informal interruptions and interchanges. Harangue from a rostrum would be a bad substitute. If Parliament was to be a strong, easy, flexible instrument of free debate, a small chamber and a sense of intimacy were indispensable.

"The vitality and authority of the House of Commons and its hold upon the electorate based upon universal suffrage depend to no small extent upon its episodes and great moments, even upon its scenes and rows which, as everyone will agree, are better conducted at close quarters. Destroy that hold which Parliament has upon the public mind and has preserved through all these changing turbulent times and the living organism of the House of Commons would be greatly impaired. You may have a machine but the House is much more than a machine; it has earned and captured and held through long generations the imagination and respect of the British nation."

The Prime Minister went on to speak of the place the House had won among the institutions of the nation. "It thrives," he said, "upon criticism. It is perfectly impervious to newspaper abuse or taunts from any quarter, and it is capable of digesting almost anything or almost any body of gentlemen, whatever may be their views, with which they arrive. There is no situation to which it cannot address itself with vigour and ingenuity. It is the citadel of British liberty. It is the foundation of our laws. Its traditions to-day are as lively as when it broke the power of the Crown and substituted the constitutional monarchy under which we have enjoyed so many blessings.

"In this war the House of Commons has proved itself to be a rock upon which an Administration, without losing the confidence of the House, has been able to confront the most terrible emergencies. The House has shown itself able to face the possibility of national destruction with classical composure.

"I do not know how else this country can be governed than by the House of Commons playing its part in all its broad freedom in British public life.

"We are building warships that will not be finished for many years ahead and various works of construction are going forward for war purposes. But I am bound to say that I rank the House—the most powerful assembly in the world—at least as important as a fortification or a battleship, even in time of war." The Prime

"Minister acknowledged the debt members owed to the peers for the use of their splendid hall, but they had no wish to outstay their welcome. "We have been greatly convenienceed by our sojourn on these red benches and under this gilded, ornamented, statue-decked roof. I express my gratitude and my appreciation of what we have received and enjoyed." But

*Mid pleasures and palaces, though we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.*

Before the speech, some members had been in favour of enlargement of the chamber. When the division was taken there were only three votes against what the Prime Minister advocated.

In preparation for the electoral battles of peace the Government decided on an examination of the size of constituencies, many of which had grown unwieldy by the growth of population. Mr. Speaker Brown agreed to preside over the conference, and a report was presented recommending the carving up of certain constituencies and other reforms. As a result, membership of the House at the ensuing General Election was increased by 25 to 640.

Winston's own constituency was one of those involved in the change, being divided into two. Having sat for the Epping division of Essex since 1924, he became Member for the Borough of Woodford.

Preparations were also made for the compilation of a new register of electors. The current register was of 1939 vintage, and so out of date that it would have the effect of disfranchising half the population. Identity card registrations were made the basis for the preparation of a new register, which was completed in time for the General Election. For the most part it was an effective improvisation, but there were some notable omissions from the voting lists, including Winston, who found himself disfranchised.

A couple of war years had to run their course before the occasion arose for the General Election to which these measures were a preliminary. Through the latter months political tendencies made themselves increasingly manifest. Though the electoral truce was maintained, Conservative seats were retained for the Government with difficulty, though Socialist candidates were uneventfully returned. In the early months of 1944,<sup>1</sup> for example, seven by-elections were held. Three seats had been represented by Socialists and Socialists were duly elected. In the other four divisions, previously held by the Conservatives, only two were retained; in the other two the Conservative nominees were defeated by Independents.

During the contest at Brighton, Winston made a vigorously

<sup>1</sup> At this time, 200 new members, almost one third of the House of Commons had been returned at by-elections since the General Election of 1935.

phrased protest against the emergence of Independent candidates who claimed to be supporting him while opposing the official Government candidate. Flight-Lieut. Teeling, standing as Conservative at Brighton, found himself opposed at the last moment by the Mayor of Brighton's barrister brother. Winston, in a letter commanding the official Conservative to the electors, wrote to Teeling, "Your opponent who styles himself independent, is reported to claim that he stands in full support of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. I am sure the electors . . . will not be taken in by this attempted swindle." The denunciation provoked much criticism and local resentment, but Winston stood by his words which, he stated, had not been lightly or impatiently used "It is this attitude of posing as a political friend and supporter of mine," he added, "trying to get votes thereby, while at the same time doing the utmost injury in his power to the cause I serve, that calls for censure." In the result Teeling won the seat, but his opponent polled over 12,000 votes—less than 2,000 short of the winner.

The war, by now, was going well; there was nothing but praise for the once challenged central direction. Confidence in Winston Churchill, the leader of the people at war, was unqualified and universal. Nevertheless, even with the political truce in operation, Conservative seats were in jeopardy. Tadpole and Taper grew concerned. There were no whisperings now about changing the captain. Tadpole had no doubt that the Prime Minister was the party's greatest political asset. Taper gave his whole-hearted endorsement to this view.

Feeling at Westminster was inevitably influenced by events in the constituencies. There was a restiveness in the House. Where war unity was not involved, back-benchers became more assertive, both Socialists and Tory Reformers. On the Education Bill, for example, Mrs. Cazalet Keir and some of the progressive Tories caused the Government to suffer its first and only defeat by carrying an amendment in favour of equal pay for men and women teachers. Under the Prime Minister's direction, they had to reverse their vote—not of course their views—the following day.

On both sides, the political leaders had to exert their authority to damp down rising party spirits. The Prime Minister was concerned lest essential unity should be impaired, and he made a protest in the House (February 22nd, 1944). "There is, I gather," he said, "the feeling in some quarters that the way to win the war is to knock the Government about, keep them up to the collar and harry them from side to side, and that I find hard to bear with Christian faith. This atmosphere and mood at home accords none too well with the responsibilities and burdens which weigh heavily on his Majesty's ministers which I can assure the House are real and heavy. We are on the advent of the greatest joint operations

between the two Allies that have ever been planned in history. There is the desire in this country in many quarters to raise the old controversies between the different parties. There is also a mood in the Anglo-American alliance to awaken slumbering prejudices and let them have their run. Yet Liberals, Labour men and Tories are fighting and dying together at the front and working together in a thousand ways at home and Britons and Americans are linked together in the noblest comradeship of war, under the fire and flail of the enemy.

"My hope is that the generous instincts of unity will not depart from us in these times of tremendous exertion and grievous sacrifice and that we shall not fall apart, abroad or at home, so as to become the prey of the little folk who exist in every country and who frolic alongside the juggernaut car of war to see what fun or notoriety they can extract from the proceedings."

Back-benchers of all parties were critical of the Government for what they termed its neglect of the problems of peace. There was no neglect of planning—but where party differences were involved preparation had to stop short of legislation. Planning was not likely to disturb the political peace. Legislation might have brought about a clash in which compromise would be impossible.

The Prime Minister would permit nothing to jeopardize political unity. It was a contribution to the national cause, but, politically, the consequences were unfortunate for him. The impression gained ground that Right Wing members of the Government were obstructing Left Wing members from carrying out progressive measures.

There was no neglect of the post-war future. While concentrating on the immediate task of winning the war, Winston did not lose sight of what he termed the "tremendous and practical duty" of ensuring that we also won the peace. "We must make sure that confusion and chaos do not follow the victories of the armies," he said in his Mansion House speech (November 9th, 1943). "I regard it as a definite part of the duty and responsibility of this National Government to have its plans perfected on a vast and practical scheme to make sure that in the years immediately following the war, food, work and houses are found for all. No airy visions, no party doctrines, no vested interests must stand in the way of providing beforehand for food, work and houses. They must be prepared now, during the war. They must come into action as soon as victory is won. On this far-reaching work his Majesty's Government are now concentrating all the energies that can be spared from the actual struggle with the enemy."

Throughout his term of office, Winston had a team of peace planners. In the first stage Arthur Greenwood was in charge; later William Jowitt took over; in the latest phase, Woolton, who had looked after the nation's larder with efficiency and

success, was made Minister of Reconstruction with War Cabinet rank. So it was that the blue-prints were prepared for the days of peace.

## CHAPTER IX

*Peripatetic Envoy*

THE confederacy of Britain, the United States and Russia brought its problems. Common policy and concerted action between three Powers is not easy of achievement. One of Winston Churchill's main contributions to victory was made in the role of principal Liaison Officer of the Allies. In this capacity he journeyed now East, now West, an indefatigable, peripatetic envoy. By warship and aeroplane he travelled thousands of miles to co-ordinate military plans and smooth out diplomatic difficulties. "Distance no obstacle" might well have been his motto.

Thanks to his missions from country to country, personal contact was maintained by the Allied chiefs. As he said (November 11th, 1942) in justification of his recurrent absences from this country : "One great obstacle to the constant unity of the Allies is geography. We stand around the circumference of the circle. The main enemy lies at the centre. Hitler can summon quite easily in conference anyone he chooses in Berlin or anywhere in Central Europe. For me, through geography, joint consultation is far more difficult. President Roosevelt has not found it possible to leave the United States, nor Premier Stalin to leave Russia. Therefore I have had to make journeys in each direction carrying with me to and fro many important military authorities and other experts and to labour as far as possible to bring all our plans into concert and harmony."

The missions to Washington in the year 1942 laid the plans that turned the tide in Africa. Victory brought new problems and even before the last round up of the enemy in Tunisia, Winston had set off on his travels again, Washington bound, to meet Roosevelt once more and put the finishing touches to the plans, provisionally agreed upon at Casablanca, for the next stage in the operations. There was some speeding up to be done, for the Allied armies had marched faster than had been foreseen. He reached Washington (May 11th, 1943) at a time when one of the recurrent "beat Japan first" campaigns was being conducted by American press and publicists. There was a feeling in the United States that Great Britain was lukewarm about the war in the Far East and this uneasiness was exploited for their own political ends by opponents

of the Roosevelt régime. There was pressure, too, from the Eastern sphere of operations, for no military headquarters can view the despatch of men and supplies to some other theatre of war without risk of transgression of the Tenth Commandment. American critics fastened on Winston's declaration that the defeat of Hitler and the breaking of German power must have priority over the decisive phase of the war against Japan. To the Pacific-looking Americans, this was heresy ; did it mean, they asked, that the British Government was intending to play only a secondary part in dealing with the Japanese ? They had their answer when Winston, for the second time, addressed a joint session of Congress.

The Prime Minister gave first place in his speech to events in the Far East as he surveyed the course of the war in the eighteen months since last he had spoken to them—"500 days, every day a day." It was a dismal record of misfortune, the Philippines enslaved, the "lustrous luxuriant region" of the Dutch East Indies overrun. And the British losses and Singapore, "the greatest military disaster, or at any rate the largest military disaster" in British history.

"Mr. President, Mr. Speaker," he declared in his most trenchant tones, "all this has to be retrieved. All this and much else has to be repaid. And here let me say this : Let no one suggest that we British have not at least as great an interest as the United States in the unflinching and relentless waging of war against Japan. And I am here to tell you that we will wage that war, side by side with you, in accordance with the best strategic employment of our forces, while there is breath in our bodies and while blood flows in our veins.

"It may not have escaped your attention that I have brought with me to this conference Field Marshal Wavell and the other two Commanders-in-Chief from India. Now, they have not travelled all this way simply to concern themselves about improving the health and happiness of the Mikado of Japan."

With emphasis, Winston repudiated the idea that we should hold anything back and as to priorities he declared the almost self-evident truism "while the defeat of Japan would not mean the defeat of Germany, the defeat of Germany would infallibly mean the ruin of Japan."

As to the purpose of his present mission, Winston explained : "I thought it my duty, with the full authority of His Majesty's Government, to come here again with our highest officers in order that the combined staffs may work in the closest contact with the chief executive power which the President derives from his office and in respect of which I am the accredited representative of Cabinet and Parliament. The wisdom of the founders of the American constitution led them to associate the office of Commander-in-Chief with that of the Presidency of the United States. In this

they are following the precedents that were successful in the days of George Washington. It is remarkable that after more than 150 years this combination of political and military authority has been found necessary not only within the United States but in the case of Marshal Stalin in Russia and of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in China. Even I, as majority leader in the House of Commons, have been drawn from time to time—not perhaps wholly against my will—into some participation in military affairs. Modern war is total. It is necessary for its conduct that the technical and professional authorities should be sustained and, if necessary, directed by the heads of Government, who have the knowledge that enables them to comprehend not only the military, but the political and economic forces at work and who have the power to focus them all upon one goal.

"These are the reasons which compelled the President to make his long journey to Casablanca and these are the reasons which bring me here. We both earnestly hope that at no distant date we may be able to achieve what we have sought so long—a meeting with Marshal Stalin and if possible with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. But how and when and where this is to be accomplished is not a matter upon which I am able to shed any clear ray of light at the present time. And if I were, I should certainly not shed it."

When the President turned over his Press Conference to him, Winston submitted himself with relish to the interrogations of 150 American reporters. His impromptus were in his Parliamentary form. Premier and Pressmen enjoyed themselves. The Americans heard with satisfaction a quotation from their own great general, Nathan Bedford Forrest, who, asked the secret of his successes, replied "I get thar fustest with the mostest men." A burst of laughter greeted the sally on Italy. "Of this you may be sure, we shall continue to operate on the Italian donkey at both ends—with a carrot and with a stick."

After a fortnight of discussions, military and political, Winston came home by way of North Africa, flying to Gibraltar and on to Eisenhower's headquarters at Algiers. The President sent with him Gen. Marshall, Chief of the United States Army and Air Force. In Washington, Anglo-American strategy had been brought into "full focus and punch." At Algiers the application of the decisions was discussed on the spot with the full team of Commanders, Eisenhower, Alexander, Montgomery, Tedder and the rest.

The visit coincided with a compromise between the de Gaullists and Giraudists, who had at last amalgamated to form the French Committee for Liberation. Winston, with Mr. Secretary Eden, lunched with the Generals and members of the Committee. Describing his impressions later, Winston said that he could not but be struck by the many different aspects of French energy and capacity

to resist, which this committee represented. A great opportunity lay before them in helping to regain France's inheritance. To this end they should act together in good faith and loyalty to one another, setting aside personal and sectional interests, and keeping all their hatreds for the enemy.

Back in England, the Prime Minister lost no time in making his report to the House of Commons. It was one of his shorter surveys and by way of excuse he remarked that he had given to the joint session of Congress the statement which he would otherwise have made to the House on the victory in Tunisia. "That," he added, "is I think a valid explanation. Certainly when I found myself walking into that august assembly the free Congress of the most powerful community in the world and when I gave them, as I would do in this House, a business-like stock-taking survey of the war and of our joint interests, even touching upon controversial matters or matters of domestic controversy over there, and when I thought of all our common history and of the hopes to lie before us, I felt that this was an age of memorable importance to mankind. For there can be no doubt that whatever world organization is brought into being after this war, that organization must be richer and stronger if it is founded on the friendship and fraternal relations and the deep understanding prevailing, and now growing, between the British Commonwealth of Nations and the United States of America."

Enemy resistance in Tunisia had ceased on May 12th. There was a lull for some weeks. Europe waited in suspense for the next Allied move. Where was it to be made? There was much speculation, eager but uninformed. It would obviously be against the mainland of Europe but whether to the North or South, opinion was divided. The school of thought that predicted a second front in France professed support for its views in Winston's guarded phrase, "It is evident that amphibious operations of peculiar complexity and hazard on a large scale are approaching." The next blow against Italy school, however, pointed in June to the taking of Pantelleria, the island fortress which hoisted the white flag, without a struggle, after days of air and sea bombardment. Here, it was claimed, an assault in Italy was assuredly betokened.

At the end of June, Winston drove through the blitz-scarred London streets to Guildhall to be made a Freeman of the City. In the ruins of Guildhall, he received the scroll of freedom in a casket of oak salvaged from the ancient roof. His speech was scrutinized for any clue it might yield to future operations. The phrase was there, impressive but inscrutable—"I cannot go further to-day than to say that it is very probable that there will be heavy fighting in the Mediterranean and elsewhere before the leaves of autumn fall. For the rest we must leave the unhappy Italians and

their German tempters and taskmasters to anxieties which will aggravate from week to week and from month to month”

On July 12th, doubts were resolved. Sicily was invaded. The Allies gained a footing on an outpost of Europe. It was a hurricane campaign. The Italian forces had no will to fight. In the towns of Sicily the Allied armies were greeted as liberators, rather than as conquerors.

A tremor of alarm spread throughout Italy when, on July 19th, American bombers attacked military targets in the area of Rome. Allied propaganda supplemented the effects of Allied bombs. President and Prime Minister addressed a joint message to the Italian people—a message attuned to their hopes and their hates. The war now being carried into their territories was “the direct consequence of the shameful leadership to which you have been subjected by Mussolini and the Fascist régime.” The Italians were of the same way of thinking. Italian soldiers had been “betrayed and abandoned by the Germans on the Russian front and on every battlefield in Africa, from Alamein to Cape Bon.” The Italians were conscious of the shame. “The sole hope for Italy’s survival lies in honourable capitulation.” It was an expression of Italian hopes.

On July 19th Mussolini hurried north to meet his master. He came back to Rome and his fall. On the evening of Sunday, July 25th, at about eleven o’clock, people in this country heard with grim satisfaction that he had been cast out by his Fascist associates. Two days later in the House, Winston, with relish, pronounced upon his downfall and the close of a twenty-one years’ epoch in the history of Italy.

“The end of Mussolini’s long and severe reign over the Italian people undoubtedly marks the close of an epoch in the life of Italy. The keystone of the Fascist arch has crumbled. The guilt and folly of Mussolini have cost the Italian people dear. It looked so safe and easy in May 1940, to stab falling France in the back and advance to appropriate the Mediterranean interests and possessions of what Mussolini no doubt sincerely believed was a decadent and ruined Britain. It looked so safe and easy to fall upon the much smaller state of Greece. However there have been interruptions. Events have taken a different course.”

And what of the future? A decision by the new Italian Government of Badoglio to continue under the German yoke would not seriously affect the course of the war, still less alter its ultimate result. The only consequence would result in the land of Italy being seared and scarred and blackened from one end to the other. The choice was open to the Italians and the Prime Minister’s counsel was to allow them to “stew in their own juice for a bit and hot up the fire a bit to accelerate the process.”

So the unhappy Italians were suffered to stew. Air-raids on their cities, Milan, Turin, Geneva hotted the fire. In Sicily their German allies fought on, the ravages of war adding to the ages-old destruction of Etna, on whose slopes the last engagements were fought. The inevitable end came on August 17th. The island had been taken in 38 days with a loss to the enemy of 165,000 in killed, wounded and prisoners.

By that time Winston had gone overseas again to resume with Roosevelt the planning of the next operations. From August 11th to August 24th the Anglo-American war leaders, assembled at Quebec, surveyed the field of operations. It was the most comprehensive conference of the war. President and Prime Minister were accompanied by their foreign secretaries as well as their chiefs of staff. China was for the first time given a voice at Allied war councils. Russia was not represented. At first it was reported that a military representative from Moscow would be present but this was denied in a bluntly phrased denial by the Tass Agency. The Soviet Government had not received an invitation to Quebec "since by its nature the presence of any representative of the Soviet Government has not been and is not being planned." Winston later explained (broadcasting from Quebec) that as the Quebec discussions were largely concerned with operations against Japan, the Soviet Government could not have been represented because of the Russo-Japanese non-aggression pact. Nothing was more to the wishes of the President and himself than that there should be a three-fold meeting with Premier Stalin.

For the blows against Japan a new Supreme Commander of the South-East Asia front was chosen in the person of Lord Louis Mountbatten, who had been Chief of Combined Operations. It was a signal honour for a man of only 43, but this was becoming increasingly a young man's war. As Winston said, "If an officer having devoted his life to the military art does not know about war at 43, he is not likely to know much more about it later on." Winston enlarged the language, "pedants notwithstanding," to find a description of the young Commander-in-Chief as the "Complete triphibian"—a creature equally at home in three elements, earth, air, water and also well accustomed to fire.

French affairs found their place on the Quebec agenda. Manœuvrings at Algiers had resulted in a new arrangement between the rival factions, whereby the de Gaullois advanced towards the ascendancy they sought. The original two-headed Committee was superseded by a new Committee of Liberation of which de Gaulle was made political head, while Giraud was appointed Commander-in-Chief of Free French Forces. De Gaulle had been soliciting recognition from the Allied Powers, and recognition would be tantamount to underwriting the claim of the Committee to be

provisional Government of France. Feeling in America at its most cordial was lukewarm towards de Gaulle, but it was judged best at Quebec to concede partial recognition of the Committee as a provisional instrument, "Trustees of France during the time of her incapacity" as Winston phrased it. By this provisional limitation it was sought to preserve the freedom of the French people to choose their ultimate Government for themselves. By accordan<sup>t</sup> partial recognition, it was sought to put an end to the embarrassment of sustained solicitation.<sup>1</sup>

The business of Quebec concluded, Winston did not return at once to England. Great events were impending and he wished to be at hand for consultation with the President. So he journeyed south to receive the honorary degree of D.L. from Harvard University. "Dr." Churchill—it is a title I have not heard applied to him—made use of the occasion to address the American people on the perils of isolationism. It was a venturesome speech for a visitor from abroad, plunging into the hot fires of domestic controversy. The isolationists criticized him for it, but the indiscretion, if such it were, was a calculated one. His main purpose was to preach the need for continued co-operation in the days of peace. It was of no use, he argued, for the United States to say they did not want to be involved in the war. The long arm of battle reached out remorselessly. The price of greatness was responsibility. Common action between the United States and Britain had now reached the point where they used British and American troops, ships, aircraft and munitions as if they were the resources of a single nation. It was a wonderful system. There had been nothing like it in the last war, never, in fact, anything like it between two Allies.

"In my opinion," Winston declared, "it would be a most foolish and improvident act on the part of our two Governments, or either of them, to break up the smooth running and immensely powerful machinery the moment the war is over. For our own safety as well as for the security of the rest of the world, we are bound to keep it working and in running order after the war, not only until we have set up some world arrangement to keep the peace, but until all know it is an arrangement which will really give us the protection we must have from danger and aggression. We must not let go the securities we have found necessary to preserve our lives and liberties until we are sure we have something to put in their place."

"I am here to tell you," he said in his concluding passage, "that

<sup>1</sup> A few weeks after recognition had been accorded, the Committee was again reformed with de Gaulle as President, and the Commander in Chief excluded from membership. The following year the post of Commander in Chief was abolished and Giraud refusing the titular office of Inspector General, went into retirement.

whatever form your system of collective security may take, however the nations are grouped and ranged, whatever derogations are made from national sovereignty for the sake of the larger synthesis, nothing, will work soundly or for long without the united effort of the British and American peoples. If we are together, nothing is impossible, and if we are divided all will fail."

Meanwhile, though Winston might like to linger in academic groves, events were hurrying on. Though the outside world was yet unaware of it, the Allied leaders had arranged with Marshal Badoglio for the Italians—or for such of them as had it in their power to do so—to break with the Germans. On September 3rd, fourth anniversary of the outbreak of war, the Eighth Army invaded the Toe of Italy. It was the day on which the Armistice with the Italian Government had secretly been signed. Five days later, Eisenhower broke the news to the Italian people, and the world at large. A few hours afterwards British and American forces landed at various points in the bay of Naples.

The Allies were back at last in Europe. For some days it was a precarious foothold. The Germans, forewarned of Italian intentions, had been improvising counter-measures. They had secured the Imperial City, from which King Victor Emmanuel and Badoglio escaped by a narrow margin. They had concentrated forces in the area of the assault in the Bay of Salerno. For some hours it looked as if the Allies might be pushed back into the sea. Allied 'planes and naval gunnery turned the balance. The foothold in Europe was secured. A week after the landings, Montgomery's men, pushing up from the south, linked up with the Fifth Army.

The story of those stirring days formed the subject of one of the most eventful addresses of the chronicler to Parliament. Winston reviewed developments in a speech to the House on September 21st, 1943.

The events which had produced the capitulation of Italy had not escaped criticism. It was argued in some circles that the Allies had been as surprised as the enemy by the extent of their successes, and it was asserted that the plans of the Supreme Command had not been flexible enough to take advantage of the swiftly changing situation. With this was coupled the covert suggestion that there had been too much direction from Quebec, not enough initiative left to the Commanders on the spot. So, while Winston had a gratifying series of victories to dwell upon, he had at the same time to meet the criticism of those who thought we might have carried Rome and Italy at the initial assault. Another objection taken was that the landing had been in the wrong area and should have been further to the north.

First the Prime Minister discussed the fighting in the Far East, the bombing of Germany and U-boat warfare. Having completed

these preliminaries, he turned to Italy. "July 25th," he began, "was a memorable day." Then Dictator Mussolini was overthrown and the Badoglio Government came into existence. Feelers were put out by the Italians and terms were sought from the Allies; the Italians sought not merely to cease fighting the Allies, but to begin fighting the Germans. To all advances the reply was made that surrender must be unconditional. Finally, on August 15th, an Italian envoy of the rank of General called on the British Ambassador at Madrid (Samuel Hoare, later Lord Templewood). Bearing the demand for unconditional surrender he made his way back with great secrecy and danger to Rome. Meanwhile another Italian emissary arrived, bringing with him, as evidence of his credentials, the captured British General, Carton de Wiart, V.C. This did not affect the course of events, except that the General regained his freedom. In due course the original envoy came back with the Badoglio Government's acceptance of the terms, though he did not see how his Government would be able fully to comply, in the teeth of the heavy German forces gathered near Rome and at many other points.

"The real difficulty," said Winston, "was that the Italians were powerless until we landed in strength and we could not give them the date. We therefore timed the announcement of the Armistice for the moment which would give us the best military chance and the Italians the best chance of extricating themselves from the German grip. This means that the Armistice should be accorded only at the moment or just before our main descent."

"We offered and prepared to land an American airborne division in Rome at the same time as the Armistice was declared in order to fight off the two German armoured divisions which were massed outside it, and to help the Italians. But owing to the German investment of the Rome airfields, which took place the last day or two before the announcement of the Armistice, of which the Italian Government warned us, it was not possible to carry out this part of the plan."

In a divergence from his main narrative, Winston dealt with the rescue of Mussolini,<sup>1</sup> by German paratroops, a stroke of great daring and conducted with heavy force. A particular stipulation had been made for the surrender of Mussolini to the Allies, but there was no reason to think there had been any slackness here, or breach of faith on the part of the Badoglio Government.

The Armistice terms were ultimately signed on the night of September 3rd at Syracuse. "I have seen it said," went on the Prime Minister, "that 40 days of precious time were lost in these negotiations and that in consequence British and American blood

<sup>1</sup> The Duce had been confined in a Winter Sports hotel on the highest peak of the Abruzzi Mountains

was heedlessly shed near Salerno. This criticism is as ill-founded in fact as it is wounding to those who are bereaved. The time of our main attack upon Italy was fixed without the slightest reference to the attitude of the Italian Government, and the actual provisional date of the operation was settled long before any negotiations had taken place, and even before the fall of Mussolini. That date depended upon the time necessary to disengage our landing-craft from the beaches of Southern Sicily, across which, up to the first week in August the major part of our armies actually engaged had to be supplied from day to day. These landing-craft had then to be taken back to Africa. Those that had been damaged, and they were many, had to be repaired and then reloaded."

There was another divergence here while Winston explained for the sake of the uninstructed the extraordinary complexity of detail involved. Every landing vessel had to be packed in the exact order in which the troops landing from it would require the supplies. Every lorry was packed with precisely the articles each unit would require. All were packed exactly in series with the things having priority on the top. Only in this way could these extraordinary operations be carried out in the face of modern fire power.

The preparation of the landing-craft was the decisive factor in the landing date. It had nothing to do with wasting time over the negotiations, nothing to do with the Foreign Office holding back the generals while they worried about this clause, that clause and so forth.

"When I hear people talking in an airy way of throwing modern armies ashore here and there, as if they were bales of goods to be dumped on a beach and forgotten, I really marvel at the lack of knowledge which still prevails of the conditions of modern war." More strenuous efforts were made by all concerned to speed up the onfall. Winston read a telegram he sent to General Alexander on August 18th :

You are no doubt informed of the Italian approaches to me and the answer we have sent them. Our greatest danger is that the Germans should enter Rome and set up a Quisling Fascist Government under, say, Farinacci. Scarcely less unpleasant would be the whole of Italy sliding into anarchy. I doubt if the Badoglio Government can hold their position until the day fixed for our main attack so that anything you can do to shorten this period without danger to military success will help very much.

General Alexander replied that everything possible was being done to speed up the operation. In the result the date was brought forward from September 15th to September 9th.

"Thus," pursued the Prime Minister, "the whole of this operation—this is my answer to the charge of delay, to the word 'slothful' which I have seen used in one quarter—the whole of this operation was planned as a result of decisions taken before the fall of Mussolini. The Italian surrender was a windfall, but it had nothing to do with the date fixed for harvesting the orchard. The truth is that the Italian armistice was delayed to fit in with the attack, not the attack delayed to fit in with the announcement."

The invasion in the Naples area was the most daring amphibious operation the Allies had so far launched, or which had ever been launched on a similar scale in war. In North Africa little resistance had been expected. In Sicily the resistance of the Italians was expected to be lukewarm and they outnumbered the Germans. In North Africa no serious air power was likely to be encountered; the descent upon Sicily was covered by our overwhelming air power.

"But in the Gulf of Salerno we were at the extreme range of our shore-based fighter aircraft flying from Palermo and from conquered Sicilian airfields. Until we gained refuelling stations on land our single-engined fighter squadrons had but a quarter of an hour's activity over the battle area. We could not go farther north than Naples unless we dispensed with aid from shore-based aircraft. Even landing where we did, we were dependent to an important extent upon sea-borne aircraft. To have gone further north would have deprived our carriers of the support of shore-based aircraft, without which they themselves would have been the sole object of the enemy's air attack, thus absorbing their own air power for their own defence instead of using it to help the troops over the beaches."

All these considerations had been known to the Germans. Although the German forces were not numerous enough to man the whole of the threatened sector of the coast, they could counter-attack within a few hours with a force which at each stage of the build-up of the first week or so was by our estimates at least equal to our own.

"I think," summed up the Prime Minister, "the case against needless delay is pretty compact and watertight. Indeed, when I survey in retrospect last week's intense fighting, with the battle swaying to and fro, I am bound to say—I make this admission—that it looks as if we had cut it very fine indeed. For what happened?

"On the night of the 8th–9th the approach and the landing were successfully effected, but the battle which developed from the second day onwards was most severe and critical. The British and American divisions fought side by side with their backs to the sea, with only a few miles of depth behind them, with their equipment coming in painfully over the beaches, and their landing-craft and supporting squadrons under recurrent enemy air attack. The

Germans came at them in well-organized assaults, fighting with their practised skill both in defence and in offence. From day three to day seven the issue hung in the balance, and the possibility of a large-scale disaster could not be excluded. You have to run risks. There are no certainties in war. There is a precipice on either side of you—a precipice of caution and a precipice of over-daring.

"General Alexander, in whose group of armies the whole of this operation lay, and later the supreme commander himself, General Eisenhower, proceeded to the scene in person, visited the divisional and brigade headquarters on this fluctuating battlefield, and conferred with Gen. Clark at his battle-post on shore. Every inch of the ground was savagely disputed. The harbour at Salerno was gradually got into working order, and is now discharging supplies on a considerable scale. Reinforcements, of which there is no lack, were poured in to the utmost limit of our landing-craft and means of supply.

"But the battle swayed to and fro, and the Germans' hopes of driving us into the sea, after a bloody battle on the beaches, must at times have risen high. We thought we had their measure, and so it turned out; but one can quite understand that their hopes may have risen high. The British Battle Squadron, some of the finest battleships, joined the inshore squadron in a heavy bombardment, running a great risk, within close range and in narrow waters, from the enemy's aircraft, U-boats, if any, and the glider bombs which inflicted damage on some of the ships—they came straight in and stood up to it at close range, and equalized and restored the artillery battle. These ships had guns which could contend with enemy batteries mounted in very prominent positions.

"The British and American air forces also surpassed all their previous efforts. Almost 2,500 fighter and bomber sorties were flown during the 24 hours at the height of the battle, and 1,400 tons of bombs were dropped on the German forces on the battlefield and on their immediate communications during this same 24 hours' period.

"Meanwhile the Eighth Army, whose operations had been considered from the beginning as complementary to the blow we were striking with the Fifth Army—the Eighth Army, which had become master at many points in the Toe, the Ball and the Heel of Italy, advanced with giant strides, and on the tenth day of the struggle began to intervene, as it was meant to do, on the enemy's southern flank and rear.

"Yesterday's reports from the battlefield leave no doubt that the enemy has been worsted, that our main forces are firmly ashore, and that the Eighth Army has come into action in a suitable place, that we have recovered the initiative, and that we are able now

to advance northward on a broad front. That operation is now in progress. We must, I think, consider this episode—the landing on the beaches of Salerno—as an important and pregnant victory, one deserving of a definite place in the records of the British and United States Armies fighting together and shedding their blood in a generous cause.

"While this struggle was raging, the Armistice with Italy was made public and the Badoglio Government ordered the Italian troops to fulfil its conditions. They also called upon them to resist the Germans when attacked by them. The German Panzer divisions outside Rome broke into the city and drove out the King and Government, who have now established themselves behind our advancing lines."

The Italians had shown themselves to be unfriendly or hostile to the Germans. It was necessary that all surviving forces of Italian national life should be rallied round the King and the Badoglio Government.

Here a member interjected, "You will not get Italian people to rise behind the barrier of turncoats"—a line of criticism that had arisen over Darlan in North Africa.

"I think," retorted the Prime Minister, "that the hon. gentleman may not be thinking quite sufficiently of the importance of diminishing the burden which our soldiers have to bear. In my view, it is a duty in a situation of this kind for all forces who will make head against the scourge of their nation—the Fascist Quisling Government of Mussolini supported by the German invaders—to rally and get together to make the best stand and head they can." That would be without the slightest prejudice to the untrammelled right of the Italians to chose their own democratic Government at some future date.

A most tangible advantage from the overthrow of Italy was the surrender of the Italian Fleet. Practically the whole of the Italian Navy,<sup>1</sup> many merchant ships and submarines had, under conditions of great risk, made their way to Malta or to other ports under British control. This event had decisively altered the naval balance of the world. Not only had the Allies gained the Italian Fleet to use in any way they thought most serviceable, but there was also set free the stronger British Fleet which had been measured against it. "We came," said Winston, "into two naval fortunes on the same day—or as we put it in this House, it counted two on a division."

What would be the position of the Italian people in their new situation? The Prime Minister looked forward to the time when

<sup>1</sup> Five battleships and six cruisers steamed from their refuges to come under the orders of Admiral Cunningham. The battleship *Roma* was sunk on the voyage by enemy torpedo-bombers.

they would have regained their place among the democracies. Here he drew a distinction between them and the Germans. "Herr Hitler," he said, "has left us in no doubt that he considers the conduct of Italy treacherous and base in the extreme—and he is a good judge in such matters. Others may hold that the act of treachery and ingratitude took place when the Fascist confederacy, headed by Mussolini—for he was not alone, though now become the absolute dictator of his country's destinies, with the whole nation ground up into his system after nearly a generation of totalitarian rule—when he used his arbitrary power to strike for material gain at falling France and so became the enemy of the British Empire, which had for so many years cherished the cause of Italian liberty, and afterwards became the enemy of the United States, in which six or seven millions of Italians have found a happy home.

"Though it cannot be undone, and though nations which allow their rights and liberties to be subverted by tyrants must suffer heavy penalties for those tyrants' crimes, yet I cannot view the Italian action at this juncture as other than natural and human. May it prove to be the first of a series of acts of self-redemption

"The Italian people have already suffered terribly. Their manhood has been cast away in Africa and Russia, their soldiers have been deserted in the field—we have seen that ourselves—their wealth has been squandered, their Empire has been lost—irretrievably lost. Now their own beautiful homeland must become a battlefield for German rearguards. Even more suffering lies ahead. They are to be pillaged and terrorized in Hitler's fury and revenge. Nevertheless, as the Armies of the British Empire and the United States march forward on Italy, the Italian people will be rescued from their state of servitude and degradation, and be enabled in due course to regain their rightful place among the free democracies of the modern world.

"I cannot touch upon this matter of Italy without exposing myself to the question, which I shall be most properly asked, 'Would you apply this line of argument to the German people?' I say, 'The case is different.' Twice within our lifetime, and also three times in that of our fathers, they have plunged the world into their wars of expansion and aggression. They combine in the most deadly manner the qualities of the warrior and the slave. They do not value freedom themselves, and the spectacle of it in others is hateful to them. Whenever they become strong they seek their prey, and they will follow with an iron discipline anyone who will lead them to it.

"The core of Germany is Prussia. There is the source of the recurring pestilence. But we do not war with races as such. We war against tyranny, and we seek to preserve ourselves from destruction. I am convinced that the British, American and Russian

peoples, who have suffered measureless waste, peril and bloodshed twice in a quarter of a century through the Teutonic urge for domination, will this time take steps to put it beyond the power of Prussia or of all Germany to come at them again with pent-up vengeance and long-nurtured plans. Nazi tyranny and Prussian militarism are the two main elements in German life which must be absolutely destroyed. They must be absolutely rooted out if Europe and the world are to be spared a third and still more frightful conflict.

"The controversies about whether Burke was right or wrong when he said, 'I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people'—these controversies seem to me at the present time to be sterile and academic. Here are two obvious and practical targets for us to fire at—Nazi tyranny and Prussian militarism. Let us aim every gun, and let us set every man who will march, in motion against them. We must not add needlessly to the weight of our task or the burden that our soldiers bear. Satellite states, suborned or overawed, may perhaps, if they can help to shorten the war, be allowed to work their passage home. But the twin roots of all our evils, Nazi tyranny and Prussian militarism, must be extirpated."

On October 1st, the Allied Forces had won the first phase of the Battle of Italy and entered Naples. Thirteen days later, the Badoglio Government declared war on the Germans, and the Allies accepted Italy as co-belligerent.

On October 12th, the Prime Minister rose in the House. "I have an announcement to make," he said, with evident satisfaction at the terms in which he was introducing it, "arising out of the Treaty signed in this country and Portugal in the year 1373 between His Majesty King Edward III and King Ferdinand and Queen Eleanor of Portugal." Without disclosing the substance of the communication, Winston went on to quote the terms of this ancient undertaking.

*In the first place we settle and covenant that there shall be from this day forward, true, faithful, constant, mutual and perpetual friendships, unions, alliances, and needs of sincere affection and that as true and faithful friends we shall henceforth, reciprocally, be friends to friends and enemies to enemies and shall assist, maintain and uphold each other mutually by sea and by land against all men that may live or die.*

This engagement had now lasted for 600 years and was without parallel in world history. "I have now," proceeded the Prime Minister, coming at length to the subject of his announcement, "to announce its latest application. The British Government, basing themselves on the ancient alliances had requested the Portuguese to accord them facilities on the Azores to enable better protection to be provided for merchant shipping in the Atlantic. This

request has been agreed to by Dr. Salazar, thus providing an additional guarantee for the development of Anglo-Portuguese friendship in the future."

This was one of the decisive measures in countering the ubiquitous U-boat. In the early stages the enemy had placed high hopes on the U-boat as a means of putting Britain out of the war. It remained throughout a source of acute anxiety for the Allies. In each of his many surveys of the situation, the Prime Minister found it necessary to devote a section of the speech to the progress of the swaying fortunes of battle on this front. The year 1943 was the numerical climax of the U-boat War. Never were so many submarines in operation. Never were so many sunk. Admiral Doenitz thought that he had devised the answer to our methods of detection, so he intensified his efforts. The result was stated by Winston (June, 1943) in an account of what he termed the May massacre.

"There are so many U-boats employed now that it is impossible not to run into one or other of these great screens of them which are spread out—therefore you have to fight your way through. There is no reason why we should regret that. On the contrary, it is around the convoys that the U-boats can best be destroyed. New weapons and new methods and the close co-ordination of effort between surface and air escort have enabled us to inflict casualties which have surpassed all previous records. In May, for the first time, our killings of U-boats substantially outnumbered the U-boat output. That may be a fateful milestone."

The new methods mentioned by Winston, a war secret at the time, were the result of the adaptation of the magic eye of Radar to the needs of the submarine chasers. When shipping losses on the Atlantic were at their peak in 1942, and Hitler was raising German hopes, the Prime Minister reconstituted the Battle of Atlantic Committee. He invited Stafford Cripps ("on account of the special aptitude which he possesses in forming a sound lay opinion upon these highly technical issues") to become his deputy on the committee which was charged with the duty of finding still more effective methods of combating the menace to our ocean lifelines. Under this direction, research was pressed and the results vigorously applied to put the Allies again ahead of Admiral Doenitz.

The use of bases in the Azores was the final link in the chain enabling our airmen to close the Atlantic gap, which distance had previously imposed between the air patrols flying westward from Britain and eastward from America. Thereafter, night or day, fair weather or foul, the U-boat could not elude the destroyer. The Azores bases and Radar had won the battle of the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So perilous was it for the submarines to surface that the Germans were driven to the invention of the Schnorkel air-tube, to recharge their batteries while under water. The war ended before the Navy had full opportunity to test their retort to this riposte.

The year 1943 ended with a burst of diplomatic activity and conferences, first between the Foreign Secretaries and then between Chiefs of State. Winston once again journeyed abroad. The long-expected meeting of the Big Three was held at Teheran. It had been preceded by discussions at Cairo between Churchill, Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek on the Far East conflict, at which, for reasons previously explained, Moscow could take no part.

Preliminary work at Moscow had paved the way for the Tripartite meeting and had assured its success. Eden, Cordell Hull, who, at 72, had made the journey by air ("that gallant old eagle who flew far on a strong wing") and Molotov had devoted eleven days to hammering out agreements on military and diplomatic problems which, unsettled, would have been fruitful of controversy. In the case of Italy, for example, where the continued existence of the Badoglio Government was the cause of suspicions in Russia, a declaration was issued foreshadowing the restoration of democratic government and the suppression of Fascism, and all its agencies. On Austria another declaration registered the intention of the Powers to restore the independence of that, the first free country to fall a victim to Nazi aggression. A third declaration on German atrocities gave warning to the Nazis that those responsible would be brought to book for their tortures, shootings, massacres and other abominations. The guilty would be pursued to the ends of the earth and delivered to their accusers so that justice might be done. Beyond this, the Foreign Ministers took a widely ranging view of affairs ("no major political question in Europe" was omitted, Eden stated later), and if agreement was not possible on all points, difficulties were frankly faced.

So, the minor three at Moscow having done the spade-work, the major three had no difficulty at Teheran in reaping the harvest. President and Prime Minister had journeyed far to make possible a meeting with Premier Stalin, who in visiting Iran had left Russia for the first time since the far-off days of 1912. There were other circumstances to create goodwill on the part of the Russians. Their own campaign had been crowned with massive victories; the Nazis had been pushed far back. And now the Russians' main hope was about to be fulfilled by their Allies and a second front established in Northern Europe. The conference setting amidst the Persian mountains, the snow-capped peaks of the Elbruz, was calculated to promote harmony. According to some observers, it was like a scene from the Arabian Nights. Roosevelt, on waking the first morning, thought he was back in Arizona or New Mexico. Winston, so far as I can establish, failed to describe the scene—an omission which has deprived us of one of his landscapes in prose.

On the day of their arrival (November 27th) the war chiefs and their attendant delegations entered a 50-acre compound from

which, for reasons of security, they were cordoned off from the world. German saboteurs had been dropped in Iran shortly before, and the authorities were leaving nothing to chance. The Persian Government closed the frontiers, suspended radio transmissions and stopped telegrams and mails for abroad for the duration of the meeting. The Soviet Embassy was the venue of the main talks. G.P.U men provided the domestic staff for the occasion and were to be seen sweeping the floors with revolvers at their hips. The President was the guest of the Russians in a villa in the Embassy grounds. Winston stayed in the British Legation. Russian tommy-gunners and G.P.U. troops were everywhere on guard. There were machine-guns on the walls of the United States Legation, while armoured cars, and men of the Buffs and Sikh troops were on guard at British headquarters.

Within the cordon the utmost friendliness prevailed. The labours of the official conferences were relieved by the exchange of lavish hospitality. There was an impressive ceremony when Winston presented to Premier Stalin the sword of honour, the gift of King George, made in honour of the defenders of Stalingrad. The sword was borne by a Lieutenant of the Buffs. Premier Stalin and the Prime Minister stood while the Internationale and God Save the King were played. Then Winston said, "Marshal Stalin, I have the command of his Majesty King George VI to present to you for transmission to the city of Stalingrad this sword of honour of which His Majesty has himself approved the design. This blade bears upon it the inscription :

*To the steel-hearted citizens of Stalingrad, the gift of King George VI  
in token of the homage of the British people."*

Stalin, himself a man of steel, was deeply moved as he briefly expressed the appreciation of the Russian people. Then the Lieutenant of the Buffs placed the sword across the Prime Minister's outstretched arms. Stalin received it and kissed the blade below the hilt, thereafter passing it to Marshal Voroshilov. The sword was then ceremoniously entrusted to a Russian guard of honour.

The following day was Winston's 69th birthday. He was the host of his fellow delegates at a dinner-party which we are told was of a "jovial" character. From members of the Forces on duty at Teheran he received Eastern gifts—a silver cigar-box of Isfahan work from all ranks of Paiforce (Persia-Irak Command), an Isfahan silver tray from the Buffs, and an Imami miniature in an ivory frame from the Sikhs.

Stalin gave the toast of "My fighting friend Winston Churchill," who in turn lifted his glass to "Stalin the Great" and "Roosevelt the man".

These pleasantries were no more than diversions as the serious

tasks of the conference were discharged. Paramount among these was the concerting of the forthcoming operations against the enemy. On this the communiqué that announced the proceedings to the world stated, "Our military staffs have joined in a round-table discussion and we have concerted our plans for the destruction of the German forces. We have reached complete agreement as to the scope and timing of the operations which will be undertaken from East and West and South."

When Anthony Eden gave the House an account of the deliberations, in which he was a participant, there were two points he emphasized—the arduous nature of the talks and the success with which they were crowned. "Four working days and they were crowded days," he said. "These meetings between the three men who bear the chief responsibility must be a rare event. Their value can hardly be exaggerated. They imposed an additional heavy burden upon those who travelled to or took part in them. It is not so much the intensity of the work that has to be done as the wide range of subjects through which the mind has to move. I do not believe that the Prime Minister, ardent for work as we know him to be, has ever devoted more hours of the day and of the night to unremitting labour." It was found possible to bring Allied plans to a state of complete and collective preparation far beyond anything hitherto realized in the war. Every plan had been jointly agreed and the timing had been agreed upon as well. Beyond this the foundations for peace had been advanced for maintaining orderly progress in the world. These foundations had been laid at Moscow: they were confirmed at Teheran.

The tripartite declaration with which the conference concluded, ended with the words, "We came here with hope and determination. We leave here friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose." There is a Winstonian ring about those phrases. They were his summing up of the achievements of Teheran. By the time he was able to give the House his account of the proceedings, the war had passed on and they were already ancient history. For, an unforeseen derangement of plan delayed his return home—pneumonia, the second attack in the year.

From Teheran Winston flew back to Cairo, where, with Roosevelt, he entered on a new series of conferences with the President Ineunu and the Turks. There were also talks on the problems of the Lebanon with the two British Ministers Harold Macmillan and Sir Edward Spears. Thereafter Winston had planned to visit the front in Italy, but he was so overcome with fatigue that he had to ask Eisenhower for a few days' rest before proceeding. On December 12th fever ensued and pneumonia developed.

The announcement from 10 Downing Street on December 16th that he had been in bed for some days and that his left lung had a

patch of infection, was the cause of public concern. It was not confined to his fellow-countrymen, but was general throughout the Allied peoples, with whom, no less than with his own folk, he had come to stand as the personification of their cause, their determination and their ultimate hope of victory. The issue of the bulletins was followed with an intensity of anxiety. It was a source of satisfaction to know that his personal physician, Lord Moran, was with him, having travelled with the delegation to the Near East. Two consultants attached to the Middle East Forces were called in. Mrs. Churchill was flown to her husband's bedside (he had been accompanied to Cairo and Teheran by his daughter Sarah), and by the time of her arrival, danger was over. By Christmas the patient was gathering strength, cheered by the messages sent to him in London by "friends known and unknown, both at home and abroad."

The bulletins had recorded that Winston was on the mend, but it was his own personal message which assured the world he was getting back to normal. Writing after more than a fortnight's illness and before he left "for an unknown destination" to recuperate, he made happy play on the initials of the new anti-pneumonia drug and his two doctors, Moran and Brigadier Bedford. "When the photographs showed that there was a shadow on one of my lungs," he wrote, "I found that everything had been foreseen by Lord Moran. Excellent nurses and the highest medical authorities in the Mediterranean arrived from all quarters as if by magic. This admirable M. & B., from which I did not suffer any inconvenience, was used at the earliest moment, and after a week's fever the intruders were repulsed. I hope all our battles will be equally well conducted. The M. & B., whom I may also call Moran and Bedford, did the work most effectively. There is no doubt that pneumonia is a very different illness from what it was before this marvellous drug was discovered. I have not at any time had to relinquish my part in the direction of affairs, and there has not been the slightest delay in giving the decisions which were required from me. I am now able to transact business fully."

Winston passed the period of his convalescence at Marrakesh, in French Morocco, where he remained for the first fortnight of the New Year, returning to London on January 18th. His two illnesses, the first following the Casablanca meeting and the second after the journey to Cairo and Teheran, were plainly caused by the strain of travelling added to the burden of war-time responsibility. Plainly there was a limit to the vigour of Winston Churchill's robust heritage. He had taxed himself beyond his capacity, but if his family, his colleagues and his friends thought that he would consent in future to leave to others the task of maintaining contact with the Allies, they deceived themselves.

In 1944 he was as peripatetic as ever. Until midsummer his

duties, if nothing else, kept him at home, but June saw him overseas once more in a hurried visit to the new front in France. In August he was in Italy and, unknown outside the privileged circle, suffered a third attack of pneumonia, which speedily yielded to M. & B. In September he crossed the Atlantic for another Quebec conference. In October he was meeting Stalin once more in Moscow. In November he crossed to France to take part in Paris in the liberation celebrations. The close of the year found him in Athens trying to add peace to liberation. In 1945 he made a trip across the Rhine and attended the conferences at Yalta and Potsdam.

## CHAPTER X

### *The Channel Crossed.*

THE year 1944—the year of D-day.

All the long-drawn-out agony of the months of war, the months of endurance, the months of toil, the planning of the Chiefs of Staff, the training of the armies, the landings in Africa, in Sicily and Italy—all were but preliminaries to this, the grand assault.

D-day was a double test—a test of the commanders in the field and of the fighting men, and a test of the planners and organizers of the undertaking. Given the conditions in their favour it rested with the fighting men whether success crowned the effort. Whether they had been placed in a position where success was possible, whether they had the necessary munitions of war and enough of them, whether they had been so provided that the manifold advantages of the enemy were counterbalanced—these were questions which depended upon the skill, the foresight and the invention of the men who organized the campaign.

Amongst the undertakings of the war, D-day stands out and apart, planning superb and planning colossal. It was the most hazardous enterprise the Allies undertook. Hitler had faced the same problem of crossing the Channel and had funk'd it. The Allies faced it and carried it through. Success was made possible by the co-operation of a multitude of minds. In the inspiration of the team of planners, British and American, and in the integration of their myriad schemes into the massive enterprise, Winston Churchill played a captain's part. When the preparations were finished and the job was handed over to the fighting men, the Prime Minister, a mere spectator of events, could sit back and say :

'Tis not in mortals to command success  
But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it.

The military secrets of the six years of war have only partially

been revealed, but we have learned of some of Winston's contributions to the war effort. There is Fido—the language of initials is here an improvement on "Fog investigation dispersal operation." It was the Prime Minister's insistence which led to the development of the device that clears landing-spaces when airfields are fog-bound. His encouragement, too, contributed to the birth of Pluto, which poured petrol through the pipe-line-under-the-ocean, to ensure unstinted continuity in the supplies of motor spirit for the armies on their advance from Normandy to Berlin.

Finally there was Mulberry,<sup>1</sup> that feat of constructive engineering that sent a prefabricated port across the Channel for the reception of the armies and the unloading of their supplies. Here was one of the chief factors in the success of the Second Front—a couple of ports, of a size to dwarf Dover Harbour, that were sailed across to France and installed off the Normandy beaches. They yielded a double advantage—directly by facilitating the handling of the supplies, indirectly by affording the invaders something of a surprise. It was patent to the Germans that we could not throw an army into Europe without ports and so it was in the areas of the ports of Northern France that they particularly concentrated. The portless stretch of Normandy beaches was less carefully guarded.

The seeds for the most stupendous Mulberry on record are to be found in the direction which Winston gave as far back as the year 1942. On a sheet of 10 Downing Street notepaper, above the familiar initials, there are five lines of typescript :

PIERS FOR USE ON BEACHES

C. C. O.

or deputy.

They must float up and down with the tide. The anchor problem must be mastered. Let me have the best solutions worked out. Don't argue the matter. The difficulties will argue for themselves.

The date May 30th, 1942, is not without its interest. Things had been going badly in 1942. The critics were devoting their attention to our reverses in North Africa. Winston was looking

<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of Mr Churchill's contributions to these three war-time inventions will be found in Guy Eden's lively sketch published under the title of "Portrait of Churchill."

beyond Africa and the critics to the day that had never been out of his thoughts since Dunkirk. It is incredible that there should ever have been doubts over his intentions for a Second Front in Europe. There was nowhere a more determined Second Front than the Prime Minister. To put the British Army back upon the coasts from which it was driven in June 1940, that was the primary purpose of his strategy.

There can have been few people in the British Isles in the late Spring of 1944 who had not seen some of the signs that the opening of the Second Front was imminent. Expectation had been mounting since the announcement, at the turn of the year, that Eisenhower was to be in command, with Tedder as his Deputy and Montgomery as the number one British General. It was not until after the event that we learned that it was Montgomery who fought the battle of Normandy and was responsible for the operational plans of the entire campaign until Eisenhower took over.

As the spring advanced, portents of the invasion multiplied. Southern England was one vast camping-ground for troops. For miles tree-shaded country roads were lined with accumulated munitions. Parks and woods were depots for vehicles of war. In May the Prime Ministers of the Dominions gathered in London. Winston's pointed phrase that they were assembled to take stock of affairs at the "most deadly climax of the conflict of the Nations" underlined the significance of the meeting.

During May the air attack in preparation for the invasion reached a new intensity. More than 150,000 sorties were flown by the four air commands and 150,000 tons of bombs were delivered against a variety of objectives in Northern France and Germany. Tedder's carpet was effectively laid. The Seine bridges were wrecked. Most of the German batteries on the invasion coast were knocked out. The enemy's radiolocation network was out of action.

A general offensive in Italy served as a curtain raiser to the great assault. No progress had been made on the Italian front during the winter, the January landing at Anzio having failed in its original purpose of breaking the deadlock. In May the Allied forces, regrouped under new commanders—Alexander had succeeded as C.-in-C.—launched their offensive. The Gustav line was broken. The Fifth Army struck out from Anzio. The Eighth breached the Hitler line. On June 4th men of the Fifth entered Rome.

The following day the invasion of France had been scheduled to begin. At the last moment it had had to be postponed. The weather forecast was unfavourable. D-day was called off, but only for 24 hours.

At last on the morning of June 6th there came the announcement—"Under the command of Gen. Eisenhower Allied naval forces,

Supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France." "Began landing armies"—it was a confident phrase.

From the Prime Minister the House of Commons had an early report on the operations. Members had re-assembled that morning after the Whitsun recess. Questions were disposed of with such unusual despatch that a break was caused in the proceedings. The Prime Minister was not in his place. There was a pause. Mr. Speaker announced there would be an interval—an almost unprecedented Parliamentary departure. For some minutes there was a hum of conversation from the crowded benches. Then Winston was seen striding in. His appearance was the signal for a burst of cheering. With an apology for keeping members waiting he rose to hold them in further suspense while he reviewed the gains that had been made in Italy, and invited the House to take formal recognition of the liberation of Rome.

"I have also to announce," he went on, coming to the subject of his and Members' main preoccupation, "that during the night and the early hours of this morning the first of the series of landings in force upon the European Continent has taken place. In this case the liberating assault fell upon the coast of France. An immense armada of upwards of 4,000 ships, together with several thousand smaller craft, crossed the Channel. Massed air-borne landings have been successfully effected behind the enemy lines, and landings on the beaches are proceeding at various points at the present time.

"The fire of the shore batteries has been largely quelled. The obstacles that were constructed in the sea have not proved so difficult as was apprehended. The Anglo-American Allies are sustained by about 11,000 first-line aircraft, which can be drawn upon as may be needed for the purposes of the battle.

"I cannot, of course, commit myself to any particular details. Reports are coming in in rapid succession. So far the Commanders who are engaged report that everything is proceeding according to plan. And what a plan !

"This vast operation is undoubtedly the most complicated and difficult that has ever taken place. It involves tides, wind, waves, visibility, both from the air and the sea standpoint, and the combined employment of land, air and sea forces in the highest degree of intimacy and in contact with conditions which could not and cannot be fully foreseen.

"There are already hopes that actual tactical surprise has been attained, and we hope to furnish the enemy with a succession of surprises during the course of the fighting. The battle that has now begun will grow constantly in scale and in intensity for many weeks to come, and I shall not attempt to speculate upon its course

"This I may say, however. Complete unity prevails throughout

the Allied Armies. There is a brotherhood in arms between us and our friends of the United States. There is complete confidence in the supreme commander, Gen. Eisenhower, and his lieutenants, and also in the commander of the Expeditionary Force, Gen. Montgomery. The ardour and spirit of the troops, as I saw myself, embarking in these last few days was splendid to witness. Nothing that equipment, science or forethought could do has been neglected, and the whole process of opening this great new front will be pursued with the utmost resolution both by the commanders and by the United States and British Governments whom they serve."

Having made the statement, the Prime Minister hurried off post haste to the South of England, to get as close as possible to the fighting front. Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters was the nearest he could contrive, and here he spent several hours, reading the reports from Normandy as they came to hand. They were all of them reassuring. The operation was proceeding, in the phrasing of the communiqués, "according to plan."

Before the House rose that evening, Winston again entered the Chamber to make a further brief but encouraging statement—"Many dangers and difficulties which at this time last night appeared extremely formidable are behind us. The passage of the sea has been made with far less loss than we apprehended. The resistance of the batteries has been greatly weakened by the bombing of the Air Force, and the superior bombardment of our ships quickly reduced their fire to dimensions which did not affect the problem. The landings of the troops on a broad front, both British and American, have been effective, and our troops have penetrated, in some cases, several miles inland. Lodgments exist on a broad front.

"The outstanding feature has been the landings of the airborne troops, which were on a scale far larger than anything that has been seen so far in the world. These landings took place with extremely little loss and with great accuracy. Particular anxiety attached to them, because the conditions of light prevailing in the very limited period of the dawn—just before the dawn, the conditions of visibility made all the difference. Indeed, there might have been something happening at the last minute which would have prevented airborne troops from playing their part. A very great degree of risk had to be taken in respect of the weather.

"But Gen. Eisenhower's courage is equal to all the necessary decisions that have to be taken in these extremely difficult and uncontrollable matters. The airborne troops are well established, and the landings and the follow-ups are all proceeding with much less loss—very much less—than we expected. Fighting is in progress at various points. We have captured various bridges which were of importance, and which were not blown up. There is even fighting proceeding in the town of Caen, inland. But all this, although a

very valuable first step—a vital and essential first step—gives no indication of what may be the course of the battle in the next days and weeks, because the enemy will now probably endeavour to concentrate on this area, and in that event heavy fighting will soon begin and will continue without end, as we can push troops in and he can bring other troops up. It is, therefore, a most serious time that we enter upon. Thank God, we enter upon it with our great Allies all in good heart and all in good friendship."

It was an auspicious beginning. Even Winston's statement did not convey the fulness of the success. So well had the plans been laid, and so well executed, that at the end of 24 hours over a quarter of a million Allied troops were ashore in France.

By D-day + 3, Spitfires had their own airfields across the Channel. On D-day + 4 the Allied front was 51 miles wide and 15 miles deep.

By D-day + 6, it was possible for the Prime Minister to cross to Normandy. It was the first time he had stood on French soil since he took leave of Reynaud, on the eve of the capitulation in June 1940.

As chronicler to Parliament, Winston gave two accounts to the House of the progress of this second Battle of France. On both occasions he dwelt at length upon the planning that had made the invasion possible.

In the first of the surveys (August 2nd) he stated that the very beaches for the assault had been selected twelve months beforehand. It was in April 1943, he said, that Gen. Morgan, of the British Army, became head of the British and American Planning Staff, which surveyed the project.

"They made a plan which I took with me last year to Quebec, where it was submitted to the President and the Combined British and American chiefs of staff. This plan selected the beaches for the attack and presented the outlines of the scheme together with a mass of detail to support it. It received, in principle, complete agreement.

"It is rather remarkable that a secret of this character, which had to be entrusted from the beginning to scores, very soon to hundreds and ultimately to thousands of people, never leaked out in these islands or the wide expanses of the United States."

For more than a year before D-day, American stores, equipment and men had been moving steadily into the British Isles. From the British armies at home an expeditionary force was selected, practically as large as that of the United States in the opening stage. The training of all these troops was undertaken in most strenuous fashion.

"The great episode" of the enterprise, as Winston termed it, was the crossing of the Channel with its stormy waters, swift currents and 18-foot rise and fall of the tides. Above all, there were

changes of the weather, which, when an operation as big as this one had to be undertaken, might easily cut a portion of the army off upon the shore for several days without anyone being able to get to them, and to reinforce them or even to withdraw them and thus leave them at the mercy of a superior enemy. This was the element, this possible change in the weather, which certainly hung, like a vulture poised in the sky, over the thoughts of the most sanguine. In all these matters the work of Combined Operations, founded in 1940 under Admiral Keyes for the purpose of amphibious warfare and developed since 1940 by Admiral Mountbatten, proved its value.

Before the great attack was launched, five successful opposed landings had been made in the Mediterranean and a wonderful mass of craft of all kinds had been devised by the British services and by their United States colleagues. More than 60 variants of these landing-craft and escort vessels provided for the landing, not only of an army but of everything an army could need.

"For instance," Winston particularized, "I myself saw a few days after the landing was complete, six of these landing-craft charge up in line together till they were stopped by the sandy beach. Down fell their drawbridges, and out poured their vehicles. In five minutes an entire battery was drawn up in column of route for almost immediate action. I had this timed, because I certainly thought it would be a matter of hours, but in less than 15 minutes these heavy craft had pushed themselves off the shore and were returning to England for another consignment. This is a new atmosphere, a new light upon the possibility of an invasion across the Channel which I hope will not be altogether lost upon our own people when many of us have handed on our burdens to others."

An immense system of harbours, breakwaters and landing-stages was also prepared which, as soon as the foothold was gained, could be disposed in their appropriate places to give large, sheltered water-space. In less than a month harbours had been created compared with which Dover seemed small. At these harbours and on the beaches they protected a very large army, with the entire elaborate equipment of modern armies, giving about one vehicle for every four or five men, was landed. By the end of June, in spite of the worst June gale for 40 years, a solid base had been created which gave us the certainty of being able to conduct an offensive campaign on the largest scale against any forces which, according to our calculations, the enemy was likely to be able to bring.

Winston had been gratified to receive from British Commanders in the field messages of appreciation of the instruments of victory that had been provided. Above all there were reports about our tanks. In difficult times in the past, Winston had had to suffer admonishment from the back-benchers about the deficiencies of our

armour. Now he felt himself entitled to make a few contributions to the credit side of the ledger, in particular regarding the tank that bore his name—the most thick-skinned weapon in Europe, as he termed it, a sally that delighted the House.

"The Sherman tank," Winston said, "had maintained in Italy and Normandy the reputation gained in Africa. It is, of course, essentially a cruiser tank, like the Cromwell, which is the largest type of British cruiser tank. Both these tanks are reported to be excellent and trustworthy for the purposes for which they were designed. As the House knows, we succeeded in mounting the 17-pounder gun in the Sherman, a remarkable feat, and many hundreds of these are either in action in Normandy or moving thither in a steady stream.

"Gen. Montgomery has written as follows about the recent battle :

'In the fighting to-day we have defeated the Germans in battle, and we had no difficulties in dealing with the German army once we had grasped the problem. In this connection, British armour has played a notable part. The Panther and Tiger tanks are unreliable mechanically, and the Panther is very vulnerable from the flank. Our 17-pounder guns will go right through them. Provided our tactics are good we can defeat them without difficulty.'

"Well, they say the customer is always right !

"As to the Sherman, I saw with my own eyes last week an example of the work of the 17-pounder. It was on the approaches to Caen. There was an expanse of large fields of waving corn, out of which a grey stone village rose. Generals Montgomery and Dempsey brought me to this spot and invited me to count the broken-down Panther tanks which were littered about. I counted nine in the space of about 1,000 yards square. The General then told me that all these nine had been shot with a 17-pounder from one single British Sherman tank from the side of the village wall. One cannot help being impressed by these things when one sees them with one's own eyes.

"Of course, you will never get the same armour in a 30-ton tank as you will in one of 60 tons. But mobility, speed and manœuvrability also count high, and when the 17-pounder gun is added to all these qualities, no one has the right to say that these lighter tanks are not fitted in every way for their task and are not a wise and far-seeing employment of our war power. I am afraid all this must be causing pain and sorrow to the hon. member for Ipswich."

Mr. Stokes, the director, interjected : "That is not the whole story."

The Prime Minister : "The hon. member had better pull himself together, because there is worse to come. The notorious Churchill

tank, the most thick-skinned weapon in Europe, also won commendation.

"This tank was originally conceived in 1940, for fighting in the lanes and in the enclosed country of this island, and in spite of every form of abuse as well as the difficulty attendant upon haste in design and construction, it is now once again coming into its own as it did for a short while in Northern Tunisia in 1942. It is coming into its own because the conditions of the war in France and in the parts of Italy where we are now fighting are extremely suitable to its climbing and manoeuvrable qualities and heavy armour. No particular type can be perfect. The Tiger and the Panther are, essentially, weapons of defence, whereas the Cromwell and the Sherman belong to the offensive. The Churchill can be either defensive or offensive as circumstances may require. (Laughter.) I pass from these technical details. Gen. Oliver Leese reports as follows about the fighting in Italy :

'It may interest you to know of the fine performance of the Churchill tanks, which supported the Canadian Corps when they attacked and broke through the Adolf Hitler line last month. They stood up to a lot of punishment from heavy anti-tank guns. Several tanks were hard hit without the crews being injured. They got across some amazingly rough ground. Their 6-pounder guns made good penetration and were quick to load and aim.'

"I saw also that in the recent fighting in France similar distinction had been gained by these weapons in the assault in some of these wooded hills and in this very thickly enclosed country in which our centre is now moving."

When he surveyed the war fronts in August, the Prime Minister had been able to sound a note of confident optimism. "I have upon the whole a good report to make : on every battlefield all over the world the arms of Germany and Japan are recoiling ; there is no theatre in which Allied mastery has not become pronounced."

By the end of September, when next he reviewed the progress of the operations, confidence and optimism had been outdated by events. In the short period of seven weeks of the summer vacation the face of the war in Europe had been transformed. By September the Prime Minister was able to record proud and abundant achievement.

"Not only Paris, but practically the whole of France has been liberated as if by enchantment. Belgium has been rescued. Part of Holland is already free. The foul enemy, who for four years inflicted vast cruelties and oppression upon these countries, has fled, losing perhaps 400,000 in killed and wounded and leaving on our hands nearly half-a-million prisoners. The Allied Armies have

reached and in some places have crossed the German frontier and the Siegfried line."

Such were the fruits of the world-famed battle of Normandy, the greatest and most decisive single battle of the entire war. In the south of France there had been the landing on the Mediterranean coast, the freeing of Toulon and Marseilles and the successful advance up the Rhone Valley. Under the spell of victories in the North, these achievements had been carried through in less than half the time prescribed by plan.

The Prime Minister gave with justifiable pride some further facts and figures about the operations, the organization that had made it possible, and the share troops of the British Empire had taken in the great invasion.

"The speed," he said, "with which the mighty British and American armies in France were built up is almost incredible. In the first 24 hours a quarter of a million men were landed in the teeth of fortified and violent opposition. By the 20th day a million men were ashore. There are now between two and three million men in France."

The actual number of soldiers was only part of the problem of transportation. The armies were equipped with the most perfect modern weapons and every imaginable contrivance of modern war and an immense artillery supported all their operations. Enormous masses of armour of the highest quality and character gave them extraordinary offensive power and mobility. Many hundreds of thousands of vehicles sustained their movements, many millions of tons of stores had already been landed—the great bulk of everything over open beaches or through the synthetic harbours.

"All this constitutes a feat of organization and efficiency which should excite the wonder and deserve the admiration of all military students as well as the applause of the British and American nations and their Allies."

Having paid his tribute to the United States Army, the skill of its commanders and the valiant and ruthless battle-worthy qualities of its forces, the Prime Minister spoke of the contribution made by the British forces. Here he was replying to depreciatory statements that had been made in the United States, in particular by an unnamed senator who had said that the American public would be shocked to learn that their Army would have to provide 80 per cent of the forces to invade the Continent.

Winston recalled that on the outset of the invasion British and American Forces had been, numerically, practically equal, and he went on: "I am glad to say that after 120 days of fighting we still bear, in the cross-Channel troops, a proportion of two to three in personnel and of four to five and a half in fighting divisions in

France. Casualties have followed very closely the proportions of the numbers. In fact, these troops fight so level that the casualties almost exactly follow the numbers engaged. We have, I regret to say, lost upwards of 90,000 men, killed, wounded and missing, and the United States, including Gen. Patch's Army, over 145,000. Such is the price in blood paid by the English-speaking democracies for the actual liberation of the soil of France.

"When this view is extended to cover the entire European scene and the campaigns both in France and Italy, it will be a source of satisfaction to the House to know that after more than five years of war, we still maintain almost exactly the same number of divisions, taking both theatres together, in full action against the enemy as the United States have, by all the shipping resources which can be employed, yet been able to send to Europe. Considering that the population of the Empire—of British race—is only 70,000,000, and that we have sustained many losses in the early years of the war, it certainly is a remarkable effort, and one which was most fully and cordially recognized by our American colleagues, the Chiefs of Staff and others, at the recent Conference in Quebec."

Summing up the state of war in Europe and Asia, the Prime Minister was sure that the House would acclaim the fighting forces in the field and their achievements. The House, he thought, might even feel disposed "to view without any special mark of disapprobation the management, combination and design which it reveals on the part of the Allied Staffs, and even on the part of the Governments concerned."

Then there were Corporal Hitler's own contributions to Allied successes, to which Winston made acknowledgment, finding cause therein for relief that the Fuehrer had survived the July bomb plot, and the revolt of German generals.

"When Herr Hitler escaped the bomb on July 21st," Winston said, "he described his survival as providential. I think from a purely military point of view we can all agree with him. Certainly it would be most unfortunate if the Allies were to be deprived in the closing phases of the struggle of that form of war-like genius by which Corporal Schickelgruber has so notably contributed to our victory.

"I always hate to compare Napoleon with Hitler, as it seems an insult to the great Emperor and warrior to connect him in any way with a squalid caucus boss and butcher. But there is one respect in which I must draw a parallel.

"Both these men were temperamentally unable to give up the tiniest scrap of any territory to which the high watermark of their hectic fortunes had carried them. Thus, after Leipzig in 1813, Napoleon left all his garrisons on the Rhine, and 40,000 men in Hamburg. He refused to withdraw many other vitally important

elements of his armies, and he had to begin the campaign of 1814 with raw levies and a few seasoned troops brought in a hurry from Spain.

"Similarly, Hitler has successfully scattered the German armies all over Europe, and by obstination at every point from Stalingrad and Tunis down to the present moment, he has stripped himself of the power to concentrate in main strength for the final struggle."

By midsummer pressure of business at home had relaxed, and the Prime Minister for the next six months was travelling from battlefield to battlefield and from ally to ally. First he crossed to France for a second time to spend three days with the armies of liberation, then (July 20th-23rd) about to burst out of Normandy. When the House rose, the Prime Minister set off for Italy, arriving at Allied headquarters on August 11th. He was in time to watch the setting off of Allied troops who were to take part in the invasion of Southern France, and regretted that he could not follow the fortunes of the invaders of August 15th from a closer vantage-point.

Political affairs took up much of his time in Italy. First he had conversations with the Yugoslav Premier, Dr. Subasitch, and Marshal Tito. Then for a week he toured the front, inspecting British, Canadian, Indian and New Zealand units. After discussing plans for future operations with Maitland Wilson and Alexander, he left military scenes for Rome and politics. At the British Embassy he met the new Italian Premier Bonomi and Prince Humbert who, on Victor Emmanuel's abdication, had been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Realm. Badoglio was Winston's guest at lunch, and later in the day the Prime Minister received the entire Italian Cabinet. He rounded off the business of the day with a meeting with the Greek Premier, M. Papandreu. On August 23rd Winston went to the Vatican and he was received in audience by the Pope, with whom he had a 45-minute conversation, characterized, according to the Vatican announcement, by "affable cordiality."

"What impressed and touched me most in my journey through Italy," he said afterwards (Speech in the Commons, September 28th), "was the extraordinary goodwill to the British and American troops everywhere displayed by the Italian people. As I drove through the small towns and villages behind the line of armies day after day, the friendliness and even enthusiasm of the peasants, workmen and shopkeepers, indeed of all classes, was spontaneous and convincing. I cannot feel—I make my confession—any sentiments of hostility towards the mass of the misled or coerced Italian people." Before leaving the country, he addressed a message to the Italians, trying, as he said, to set before them some of those "broad, simple, liberal safeguards and conceptions, which are the breath of our nostrils in this country and which sustain the rights

and freedoms of the individual against all forms of tyranny, no matter what liveries they wear or what slogans they mouth.”

The Italian tour was exhausting, and Winston again fell a victim to the pneumonia germ, a fact that was not made known until a year afterwards. M. & B. for a second time worked its wonders for him, and he did not allow himself any long respite for convalescence. A meeting with Roosevelt had been arranged, and a trifle such as pneumonia was not going to stop him from keeping the appointment. On September 10th he was in Canada for the conference. There was much to be discussed.

Events had moved with encouraging rapidity since Winston had been in Normandy. The German armies in France had melted away. Paris had been liberated. The Americans had reached the Siegfried Line. In the East the Russians had pushed triumphantly on. Rumania had capitulated. The Finns had withdrawn from the war. The Russians had declared war on Bulgaria, and two days later the Bulgars had sought an armistice and declared war on the Germans.

With so majestic a list of successes, the second conference of Quebec was held in the highest spirits. The atmosphere was markedly different from its predecessors. There was no concern about an impending invasion to arouse the anxieties of the participants. The Siegfried Line and the Rhine were minor obstacles for men who had planned the assaults on Africa and Europe. Winston was in exuberant spirits. “I cannot pretend,” he said at a Press Conference, “to be in a humble frame of mind.”

In a short space decisions had been reached on the measures for completing the war in Europe and for the destruction of the “barbarians of the Pacific.” The brief official statement on the proceedings ended on a note not usually to be found in colourless terms customary for such occasions: “The most serious difficulty with which the Quebec Conference has been confronted has been to find room and opportunity for the marshalling against Japan of the massive forces which each and all of the nations concerned are ardent to engage against the enemy”<sup>1</sup>.

So President and Prime Minister left Quebec in jubilant mood. “I enjoyed this Conference very much,” Winston declared. “It has been conducted in a blaze of friendship. I never have seen more close and complete amity—apart from that little friction about our having our proper share (against the Japanese). Apart from that, which is very satisfactorily adjusted, it has been the most agreeable of all conferences which I have ever attended.”

<sup>1</sup> While this book was going to press it was disclosed that the President and the Prime Minister reached an agreement on the pooling of knowledge about the atomic bomb between Britain, the United States and Canada and the withholding of knowledge of the secret processes, a decision which has become the subject of a controversy and the cause of dissatisfaction in Russia.

## CHAPTER XI

*Problems of Liberation*

SUCCESS of the Allied Armies in the field brought urgent new problems to be solved, the problems of liberation. The triumph of the general set the task for the diplomatist. Times had changed since on the floor of the House the Prime Minister had been recommended to find other employment for an unemployed Foreign Secretary. Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had been labouring with patience and perseverance to solve the problems of France, of Greece, of Poland, of Jugoslavia—to solve the problems and at the same time to preserve national solidarity at home and abroad unity between the Allied Powers.

When freed from German occupation, what Governments were to be set up in the liberated states? The Governments in exile which had been the focal points for organizing resistance from without, or the leaders of the resistance movements, who, from within, had directed the fight against the Germans? While there were Germans to be fought, Governments in exile and resistance movements had a common purpose, but with the Germans going or gone, community of purpose gave way before differences of politics. Governments in exile tended to be of the Right, resistance movements of the Left.

These differences between Right and Left abroad intensified political variances at home. Left Wingers of British politics identified themselves with Left Wingers of the Liberation States and championed their cause. The Prime Minister found himself under suspicion from the Left as the resentments of pre-war years began to discharge themselves. Abyssinia, the war in Spain, and Munich had left from the years of appeasement a hangover of bitterness and mistrust. It was a complication for Winston as he laboured to reconcile the irreconcilables of Europe to find the Left Wing supporters of the Government approaching politics of the Continent with the concepts of the class war, or, as he phrased it, "Confusion is caused in some minds by mixing ideology with idealism."

It had been natural enough for the British Government to have had dealings with the Governments in exile. These administrations had existed before the resistance movements came into being and they continued to be recognized. Winston found himself, as a result, charged with supporting reactionary movements against democratic parties.

British Socialists found evidence of reaction on all hands. We had entered the war, they protested, to remove the menace of

Fascism, but as the conflict developed great popular movements had emerged in the various countries in Europe which had been in conflict not only with the Germans but with the forces in their own countries imbued with the same Fascist ideas. In several cases the Prime Minister's policy had been represented as inclined to the support of many of the "worn-out régimes in Europe against the popular forces." There had been events in Belgium. There had been Darlan in North Africa, and in Italy there had been Badoglio.

Said James McGovern in one of the foreign policy debates : "The Prime Minister says, Count Sforza will not do because he is a dishonourable man. Badoglio will do for the Prime Minister although he helped to gas the Abyssinians, took the oath of allegiance to Mussolini, took filthy, Fascist lucre from the coffers of Rome and, like the rat he is, he turned against his master when he saw Mussolini going down in the sinking ship." When Winston spoke in the House of his meeting with Prince Umberto, Lieutenant-Governor of the Realm, and his ardour in the Allied Cause, there was a sneer and a laugh from the Socialist benches. "I give my opinion," said Winston with heat. "I dare say it will weigh as much as a mocking giggle."<sup>1</sup>

Winston was given a sharp reminder of the force of Left Wing opinion on affairs abroad when he made some commendatory references to Spain in his survey of world affairs in the House (May 24th, 1944). He introduced the subject by protesting against the idea that our policy towards Spain was best expressed by drawing comical or even rude caricatures of Gen. Franco. There had been a time after the fall of France when it appeared that the Spaniards might enter the war on the side of Germany. Had they yielded to Nazi blandishments the Allied task would have been the harder, but they had already had enough of war.

Another serious crisis occurred in our relations with Spain at the launching of the operation designated as "Torch," the Anglo-American invasion of North Africa. "At that moment," said Winston, "Spain's power to injure us was at its very highest. For a long time we had been steadily extending our airfield at Gibraltar and building it out into the sea. For a month before zero hour we had sometimes 600 aeroplanes crowded on this airfield in full range and in full view of the Spanish batteries. It was very difficult for the Spaniards to believe that these planes were intended to reinforce

<sup>1</sup> The case against the Government was put in more restrained terms by Vernon Bartlett, who, speaking in the debate of December 20th, 1944, said : "The factor which is at work is that all of us have underestimated the extent to which the Nationals of these (the Liberation) countries who went into exile have got out of touch with the Resistance Movements inside their countries . . . In this country we have had more to do with those exiled Governments and have made friends among them so that our sympathies are apt to be with them when they go back to their own countries."

Malta. I can assure the House that the passing of those critical days was very anxious indeed. However, the Spaniards continued absolutely friendly and tranquil. They asked no questions and caused no inconveniences.

"If in some directions they have taken an indulgent view of German U-boats in distress or continued active exportations to Germany, they made amends on this occasion for these irregularities by completely ignoring the situation at Gibraltar, where, apart from aircraft, enormous numbers of ships were anchored far outside the neutral waters, inside the Bay of Algeciras, always under the command of Spanish shore guns. We should have suffered the greatest inconvenience if we had been ordered to move those ships. Indeed, I do not know how the vast convoys could have been marshalled and assembled.

"I must say I shall always consider a service was rendered at this time by Spain not only to the British Empire and Commonwealth, but to the cause of the United Nations. I have no sympathy therefore with those who think it is clever and even funny to insult and abuse the Government of Spain whenever occasion serves."

Haden Guest immediately challenged the tribute. Was not a Fascist Government anywhere, he asked, a preparation for attack, to which Winston replied, "There is all the difference in the world between a man who knocks you down and a man who leaves you alone." He presumed that it was not our intention to include in our programme of world renovation "forcible action against any and every Government whose internal form of administration does not come up to our own ideas."

Pethick Lawrence expressed the hope that the Government would not connive in future at the destruction of democratic government in Spain as had been done in the past.

Outside the House there were protests in the Left Wing Press. Labour opinion was shocked that the Prime Minister should have praised a man "whose hands are reeking with the warm blood of his own countrymen, thousands of whom are still in prison." The sentiments might have been excellent, but, even by their authors, they would scarcely have been applied, in the full rigour of their exclusiveness, to govern all our international relationships.

Winston was not allowed to forget how deeply the critics were offended. The Spaniards might be required to stop exporting wolfram to Germany or to turn the Nazi agents out of Tangier—the Left were not appeased. Yet, though he had incurred their censure, Winston was not of a different mind from Labour members about the Franco régime, and he expressed himself with pungency when Franco wrote suggesting that Britain should join in an anti-Russian bloc. It is to be regretted that the niceties of diplomacy did not permit the correspondence to be published by us at the

time. The terms of the Prime Minister's letter were made known in an unauthorized version in America long before they were published, still unofficially, in this country.

Franco, writing from Madrid, under the date of October 18th, 1944, to the Duke of Alba, Spanish Ambassador to London, directed him to take steps to clarify Anglo-Spanish relations. Franco recalled the speech of kindly words to Spain ("which impressed public opinion here so favourably") and the fact that Mr. Churchill had in his youth unselfishly served in Spanish ranks (a reference to the visit to Cuba). He suggested that the states of Western Europe had need to reach an understanding amongst themselves, "since we cannot believe in the good faith of Communist Russia and since we know the insidious power of Bolshevism."

The Prime Minister replied directly to Franco without recourse to an ambassadorial intermediary. He and his colleagues in the War Cabinet, he wrote, were surprised that Franco should attribute Anglo-Spanish difficulties to British political opinion and to British propaganda and agents in Spain. The latter assertions had no foundation, and it was to be supposed that the Franco Government has been misled by the allegations of those whose "obvious interest was to disturb relations between the Spanish and British peoples." Apart from the two incidents at critical moments of the war, German influence in Spain had been consistently allowed to hinder the war effort of Britain and her Allies.

Now that plans for the future of Europe and the world were under consideration the British Government could not overlook the consistently hostile attitude of the Falangist Party and its close relationship with the Nazis and Fascists. And, the Prime Minister added: It was out of the question for the British Government to support Spanish aspirations to participate in the future peace settlements. Neither was it likely that Spain would be invited to join the future world organization.

As to the position of Russia, Winston commented: "I should let your Excellency fall into serious error if I did not remove from your mind the idea that H.M. Government would be ready to consider any bloc of Powers based on hostility to our Russian Allies or on any assumed need of defence against them. H.M. Government's policy is firmly based on the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942 and considers permanent Anglo-Russian collaboration within the frame of the future world organization as essential, not only to her own interests, but also to the future peace and prosperity of Europe as a whole."

To complete the record on Spain, it should be added that one of Winston's last acts as Prime Minister was to participate at the Potsdam conference in the drawing up of the statement excluding the Spanish Government from admission to the United Nations organization.

Events in Yugoslavia were the cause of concern in London. Here there was a double problem, military and political in its aspects, involving our relations with the Yugo-Slavs and with the Russians. Two organizations in Yugoslavia had proclaimed themselves resistance movements—one, Marshal Tito's Liberation Committee and his army of Partisans ; the other, Gen. Mihailovitch's organization and his Chetniks. Professing to pursue the same end of liberation for Yugoslavia, they were bitter rivals, engaged on civil war within their own land and competing for Allied support without. Mihailovitch was Defence Minister in the Royal Yugoslav Government. Tito made complaint that he and his subordinates were co-operating with the Germans, and these allegations were backed by vigorous denunciations of the Chetniks from Moscow. The British Government reviewed the position and decided to discontinue supplies to Mihailovitch, who was removed from his place as Defence Minister.

The Prime Minister made a statement on these changes in his survey of world affairs delivered to the House on May 24th, 1944, in the course of which he said :

"We have proclaimed ourselves the strong supporters of Marshal Tito because of his heroic and massive struggle against the German armies. We are sending and planning to send the largest possible supplies of weapons to him and to make the closest contact with him. Marshal Tito has largely sunk his Communist aspect in his character as a Yugoslav patriot leader. He repeatedly proclaims that he has no intention of reversing the property and social systems that prevail in Serbia, but these facts are not accepted by the other side."

Winston went on to define the main purpose which governed British policy in the case of Yugoslavia and countries similarly placed. It was to bring about the unity of all forces to destroy and expel the Hitlerite invaders. "The House," he said, "will note that all questions of monarchy or republic, of Leftism or Rightism are strictly subordinated to the main purpose we have in mind. In one place we support a king, in another a Communist. There is no attempt by us to enforce particular ideologies. We only want to beat the enemy. Then, in a happy and serene peace let the best expression be given to the will of the people in every way."

It was arranged that Tito should send a military representative to London to maintain contact. Among the members of the British mission at the Marshal's headquarters was the Prime Minister's son, who on one occasion narrowly escaped capture by the Germans. At a later stage it was the political aspect of Yugoslav affairs that became the preoccupation of British ministers, but this is no place to follow the course of differences which resulted in King Peter being forced to agree to the appointment of a Regency, and

to remain away from his kingdom after liberation was brought about.

By the autumn of 1944 a settlement of the Polish question had become imperative and urgent. It was the most vexatious of the problems of liberation. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had toiled with exemplary patience to bring about an agreement, but despite all their diplomacy they laboured in vain. The Russians required the cession of what had been Polish territory before the war and they wished to have in Warsaw a Ministry friendly to themselves. The Polish Government in London declined to agree to the territorial demands and they looked upon the Russians with a mistrust as great as that they felt for the Germans.

As the Russians advanced and set free vast areas of Poland, they were in a position to enforce their requirements. Winston was concerned that there should be a settlement by agreement. At home, Tory opinion was restive, many members of the party supporting Poles against Russians. In the United States anti-Russian feeling was reinforced in election year by the presence of three millions or so citizens of Polish origin, whose votes might have a powerful influence on the result of the choice of President.

At the Teheran conference Winston had taken up the question of Poland's future. Premier Stalin then gave him the assurance that he was resolved upon the creation of a strong and independent Poland. Early in 1944 Stalin followed this up by offering to conclude an alliance with the Poles. Winston was encouraged to hope that a settlement would be reached but the Polish Government would not compromise on the frontier. There were acrimonious exchanges between the Poles and Moscow, charges and counter-charges. Diplomatic relations were broken off. In the autumn, Winston made a second visit to Moscow and the Polish issue was one of the main subjects of his discussions.

Only two of the three Allied leaders had been present at the Quebec meeting in August, and so Winston flew East to consult with the absentee, travelling, as he put it, "from court to court like a wandering minstrel, always with the same song to sing, or the same set of songs." His stay lasted for nine days (October 9th-18th). The President was represented by Averell Harriman. Military plans had first place in the talks. There was need to co-ordinate operations for the final advances into Germany from East and West. There was not much difficulty about that. More delicate were the discussions on Poland. Here was abundant scope for discord, but though the talks with Premier Stalin were free and intimate, harmony prevailed.

In an effort to negotiate a settlement, the Polish leaders were summoned to Moscow, and M. Mikolajczyk, the Polish Premier, with his Foreign Minister, and Gen. Rola-Zymierski, of the Lublin

Committee. Winston and Stalin had a joint conference with the Poles lasting for two hours and there were prolonged discussions in which Eden, Molotov and Harriman took part. The official statement at the close of the Moscow visit stated that "important progress was made towards a solution," but though Winston returned to London with the expectation that the vexed question was at length to be disposed of, no settlement between the Poles and Russians was reached. Mikolajczyk could not persuade the London Poles to meet the Russian demands and he threw up the post of Premier.

Winston was placed in a dilemma. Britain had gone to war in support of Poland's frontiers in the west. Were we now to fall out with our Russian allies because they required Polish territory—or territory that had been Polish in 1939? Even the offer of compensation at the expense of German lands did not induce the London Poles to agree to relinquish in the east territories of Russian Ukraine and White Russia. What was Polish, they insisted, Polish should remain, and they would have nothing to do with the Curzon line.

Following his talks with Stalin at Teheran, the Prime Minister had given his views on the Polish issue in a statement to the House (February 22nd, 1944). He then said, "I have an intense sympathy with the Poles, that heroic race whose national spirit centuries of misfortune cannot quench, but I also have sympathy with the Russian standpoint. Twice in our lifetime Russia has been violently assaulted by Germany. Many millions of Russians have been slain and vast tracts of Russian soil devastated as a result of repeated German aggression. Russia has the right of reassurance against future attacks from the west, and we are going all the way with her to see that she gets it, not only by the might of her arms but by the approval and assent of the United Nations.

"The liberation of Poland may presently be achieved by the Russian armies, after these armies have suffered millions of casualties in breaking the German military machine. I cannot feel that the Russian demand for a reassurance about her western frontiers goes beyond the limit of what is reasonable or just. Marshal Stalin and I also spoke (at Teheran) and agreed upon the need for Poland to obtain compensation at the expense of Germany both in the north and west."

Winston reminded the House that Britain had never in the past guaranteed any particular frontier for Poland. We had not approved the Polish occupation of Vilna in 1920. The British view in 1919 stood expressed in the so-called Curzon line, which attempted at any rate partially to deal with the problem.

There was a full-dress debate on Poland (October 27th) following the Moscow negotiations. Winston then described to the

House how he had returned in the expectation that Mikolajczyk, after consulting his colleagues in London, would go back to Moscow with authority to negotiate a settlement of the frontier on the basis of the Curzon line. The difficulties of forming a Polish Government in harmony with the Lublin Committee might then have been overcome, in which case Mikolajczyk would have become the head of a Polish Government on Polish soil recognized by the United Nations and assured of the friendship of Stalin. These hopes had been disappointed. Mikolajczyk, after endless discussions, had failed to secure the assent of his colleagues, and accordingly resigned, a development regretted by Winston, who regarded him and his friends as the "only light which burns for Poland in the immediate future." The prospects of settlement had vanished, or at least had been suspended.

"One is reminded," commented Winston, "of the story of Sibylline books for which on every occasion the price remained the same and the number of volumes decreased until at last they had to be bought on the most unfavourable terms." Now as the Russians moved forward and the Germans were expelled from further tracts of Poland the area administered by the Lublin Committee would grow and its contacts with the Soviet Government would become more intimate and strong. "I do not know what misfortunes will attend such a development."

The Prime Minister did not agree with the view that the proposed territorial arrangements were not solid or satisfactory. Poland would be compensated in the north by the whole of East Prussia west and south of Koenigsberg, including the port of Danzig. The Poles would be free to extend to the west at the expense of Germany, gaining territories more important and more highly developed than those they would lose. These plans would involve the transfer of several millions of people as well as the expulsion of the Germans from the area to be acquired by Poland. A clean sweep would be made, and Winston did not see why there should not be room in Germany for the expelled German population. After all, he reminded the House, some seven million Germans had been killed in the war and more would be killed in the fighting yet to come.

The settlement which the Prime Minister had urged upon the Poles and recommended to the House was based upon expediency. Could it also be justified by appeal to the absolute standards of equity between nations? The debate that followed Winston's statement did not provide an incontrovertible answer. The two cases were put with fair eloquence and unquestionable emotion. But no unchallengeable judgment between the rival cases was delivered. Speakers were divided by their ideological sympathies. The Labour Party supported the Prime Minister and without much reservation endorsed the Russian claims. Conservative speakers

were<sup>3</sup> for the most part against the Government and in favour of the Poles.

Mr. Petherick, of Falmouth, gave the answer to the Prime Minister on the Russian claim for territory as a means of obtaining military security and defence in depth for the Soviet Union. He said : "We whose armies are engaged in defence of the Low Countries might just as well say that we who have experienced war at the gate of our country, will remain in occupation there after the war, because we require defence in depth for London."

The Prime Minister was informed that his speech had been received without a cheer, "In a sort of awful, ugly, apprehensive, cold silence." Poland, it was asserted, was a test case for Europe ; if we were to desert the Poles, Europe would desert us, and that would be our ruin. As to the Lublin Committee, that was "bogus," "a stalking horse of Moscow," "Child of the OGPU and Russian bayonets."

From the other benches Winston heard that Polish advocates were "apologetical hirelings," "political stooges" and reactionaries. The Polish Government in London was reactionary—"the spirit of Pilsudski broods over it." What title had the Poles to the lands the Russians claimed ? Had not the Poles under Pilsudski forced the surrender of the Western Ukraine at the time the Russians were weak ? Who were the Poles to insist on the sanctity of frontiers ? What about that little peccadillo at the time of the German rape of Czechoslovakia when the Poles had taken the chance of seizing Teschen ?

As to compensation for Poland in the west, some members saw dragons' teeth in the proposal, the seed of future wars. In the final result the Poles would be on bad terms with both their neighbours, Russians and Germans as well.

There was much play with the niceties of the Curzon line and its origin. Had it had British backing at the time it was suggested or had it not ? Had it been recommended as a frontier or as an armistice line ? Anyway, whatever it was, wasn't it (asked Mr. Boothby) reasonable ?

For the detached observer it was an ironical occasion, with the High Tories disowning and the representatives of the proletariat giving their endorsement to the findings of the old High Tory Minister. In the Elysian fields, the irony might not have been remarked by the shade of George Nathaniel, but, if that noble spirit retained any of its mortal characteristics, it would have been noted with satisfaction that to him had been attributed the posthumous privilege of delimiting one of the disputed frontiers of Europe.

In the result a settlement of the Polish question was decided upon at the Crimea conference in accordance with the territorial

proposals explained by Winston, subject to certain reservations by the Russians. The Lublin Committee, reconstituted on a broader basis and including Mikolajczyk, became the provisional government of Poland. Recognition was finally withdrawn from the Polish Government in London, which passed from the scene protesting at unprecedented procedure and the breach of principles of international law and lamenting a fifth partition of Poland.

In the case of France political problems of liberation proved to be slighter than had once been feared. The Committee of Liberation, under de Gaulle, had evolved at Algiers into a fairly representative executive, embracing representatives of the Maquis who had been resisting the Germans from within as well as the de Gaulists who had been organizing from without.

On the eve of the invasion there was renewed pressure on the British Government to accord recognition to the Committee, but this Winston refused to grant. He was reluctant in the uncertain state of French political opinion to give this endorsement to the Committee as provisional government of France. "We are not sure," Winston said, "that it represents the French nation in the same way as the Governments of Britain, the United States and Soviet Russia represent the whole body of their people. We do not wish to commit ourselves at this stage to imposing the government of the French Committee upon all of France which might fall under our control without more knowledge than we now possess of the situation in the interior of the country."

Opinion in Washington was firmly against according recognition. Relations between de Gaulle and the President were far from cordial. With Winston, de Gaulle had had his differences, but though these had found vigorous expression, this had not left any bitterness. "I have never forgotten," said Winston (August 2nd, 1944), "and can never forget that he stood forth as the first eminent Frenchman to face the common foe in what seemed to be the hour of ruin of his country. It is only fair and becoming that he should stand first and foremost in the days when France shall again be raised and raise herself to her rightful place among the Powers."

To this personal tribute, the Prime Minister added a declaration of friendship to the French. "For forty years," he said, "I have been a consistent friend of France and of her brave army. All my life I have been grateful for the contribution France has made to the culture and glory of Europe, above all for the sense of personal liberty and the rights of man that has radiated from the soul of France. But these are not matters of sentiment or personal feeling. It is one of the main interests of Great Britain that a friendly France should regain and hold her place among the major Powers. Show me a moment when I swerved from this conception and you show me a moment when I have been wrong."

With the expulsion of the invader from France and the liberation of Paris a new position arose. The de Gaulle Administration established itself in Paris. It took over the responsibility for the affairs of the larger part of the country, the military zone being alone excluded. The French consultative Assembly was enlarged to include representatives of the resistance movements and the old political parties. In these circumstances there was no longer valid reason for delaying further. On October 23rd the French Foreign Minister was informed by our ambassador (Duff Cooper) that Britain had decided to accord recognition to the de Gaulle Committee as the Provisional Government of France. Recognition was simultaneously accorded by the United States and the Soviet Union.

De Gaulle was invited to appoint a representative to the European Advisory Commission of the Allies on the basis of full equality.

Winston joined in the celebration of the re-emergence of France by visiting Paris as the guest of de Gaulle. It was happily timed to begin on Armistice Day, solemn anniversary of victory in World War the First. With de Gaulle, the Prime Minister paid tribute to the fallen by laying a wreath on the tomb of France's unknown soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. For reasons of safety—in retrospect it may be wondered why the precaution was taken—no announcement had been made of his presence in the capital. Nevertheless, the news spread from mouth to mouth and there were crowds on the boulevards to raise vociferous cries of "vive Churchill!" He had last been in Paris in May, 1940, a month before the fall of France, and the Parisians did honour to the visitor and acclaimed his share in their deliverance. Walking on foot down the Champs Elysées he passed between thunderously cheering crowds. As if by magic Allied flags and emblems had been conjured forth from their hiding-places, and windows, balconies and roof-tops were crowded as Winston made his way to the Rondpoint, to lay a wreath at Clemenceau's statue, and to the Invalides to do honour at the tomb of Foch.

At the War Ministry he was the guest of de Gaulle at a luncheon at which the General acknowledged, in happy phrases, the debt Frenchmen owed to Britain and her Prime Minister. "We should not have seen an Armistice day like to-day," he said, "had not our old and brave ally, Britain, with all her Dominions, under the inspiring leadership of him whom we are greeting here to-day, displayed the extraordinary determination to gain victory and the magnificent courage which saved the freedom of the world. There is not a Frenchman nor a Frenchwoman who is not deeply convinced of this. Hitler once said he was building for a thousand years to come. I do not know what will be remembered of his doings in a thousand years but I do know in a thousand years France will not have forgotten what has been achieved in this war by the

fighting, labouring and suffering of the noble race which Winston Churchill is leading to the heights of the highest glory. We lift our glasses in honour of Mr. Winston Churchill and of Great Britain, our ally of yesterday, to-day and to-morrow."

It was no mere phrase of civility when Winston, in his acknowledgment, said that it was difficult for him to speak on a day that had so filled him with emotion. He had been deeply moved by the sincerity and enthusiasm with which the Parisians had made him welcome. He had been able to see that morning that the French people wanted to march hand in hand with the people of Britain. Thanking de Gaulle for the words he had just spoken, Winston said, "I should be lacking in truth and gratitude if I did not pay tribute to the capital part you played in this transformation, which has brought us to a moment in history when all we have to do is to be worthy of our destiny in order to start a new era of vision and of greatness."

The following day the Prime Minister and Mr Secretary Eden met members of the Paris Liberation Committee at the Hôtel de Ville. Winston was made a freeman of the City and was presented with the German flag, which during the occupation had flown above the Préfecture de Police. He marked the occasion by addressing his hosts in French—"Be on your guard," he advised them, "because I am going to speak, or try to speak in French, a formidable undertaking and one which will put great demands on your friendship for Great Britain." He told them that he had never lost his faith in them, in the citizens of Paris or in the French army.

"I was thrilled," he went on, "when at the Front in Italy I heard the news that Paris had risen and I rejoiced with you that Paris had been freed from the Huns by the bold and vigorous effort of her people guided by many of the men and the women whom I see here at this moment. It was a great affair and the Leclerc division, for the despatching of which to France I had done my utmost, was there. I could not prophesy what was going to happen but I did everything in my power to have arrangements made for the transport of that division by sea and for its equipment with heavy arms. And what a stroke of fortune that they should have been brought here to Paris at the very moment when they could assist the powerful and vigorous effort of the citizens themselves to liberate this great and historic city."

The visit was not all vivats and felicitations. There was serious business to transact between the courtesies. Winston and the Foreign Secretary had long discussions with de Gaulle and M. Bidault on military, economic and diplomatic affairs—rearmament of the French fighting forces, help in French industrial reconstruction and the delicate problems of Syria and the Lebanon, which were to result in tension some months later. Nevertheless, it was

the felicitations which were of more moment. Goodwill between Britain and France in the spirit of the old Alliance is needed in the post-war world and goodwill between nations requires careful nurturing. In Britain there was a feeling that Frenchmen would be more inclined to resentment than gratitude to Britain for their liberation. The Prime Minister's visit as ambassador of goodwill was calculated to rekindle the spirit of allies.

## CHAPTER XII

*Storm over Greece*

IN December, events in Greece brought the Prime Minister under heavy attack. There was a revolt of E.L.A.S. in Greece and a revolt of Left Wingers at Westminster. The bitterness of Greek strife was reflected here. In the heat of recrimination it was difficult to ascertain the facts amidst the confusion of controversy in which the accuracy of nearly every assertion was impugned. The facts were these.

In preparation for the day of liberation, the British Government had taken steps to provide that the Greek people should assume responsibility for the conduct of their own affairs. From King George of the Hellenes, Papandreu received a commission to form a government. While the Minister might have been acceptable to many of the Greeks, the King was unacceptable to any but the Royalists. The Republicans held him responsible as the initial cause of the excesses of the pre-war Metaxas dictatorship and its repressions.

Throughout the war, the British Government had had dealings with King George as the Sovereign in exile. As events were viewed in Whitehall, it might appear to be constitutional, but in Greece it fostered the belief that the British Government were determined to force the return of the King upon the Greek people.

Republican suspicions were intensified by the omission from the Papandreu Ministry, as first constituted, of representatives of the resistance movements of the political Left. The feuds between Royalists and Republicans in Greece had their counterpart among the forces of Free Greeks in the Near East. Mutiny broke out in both army and navy, where republican sympathies were strong. Papandreu invited leaders of E.A.M. (the Greek Left in politics) to join the Ministry, but though its basis was broadened, the ministerial façade scarcely concealed political animosities. With the retreat of the Germans, the façade fell.

On arrival in Athens, the Papandreu Government ordered members of all resistance movements to lay down their arms. The forces of E L A.S. (military organization of E.A.M.) refused to comply. The Left Wing Ministers resigned from the Government and street fighting in Athens broke out and developed into civil war. This involved British forces in Greece who were ordered by the Allied G.O.C., Gen. Scobie, to intervene to maintain order. No other forces, indeed, existed by which this duty could have been carried out—there were Greek soldiers engaged in civil war, but no Greek army as such and no police force. Conditions in the country were chaotic.

British troops, who till then had been engaged on the charitable task of getting supplies to the starving population, were soon engaged in sharp fighting. As reports reached this country, there was an outcry from the Left, which identified itself with the cause of the Left Wing Greeks. The intervention of British forces was denounced. The Prime Minister was accused of seeking to instal a Government of Greek reactionaries and to suppress the Republicans and progressives. Passages were quoted from a despatch in *The Times* newspaper, stating that the turn of events had made it appear that "the British Government and the British Army were prepared to support M Papandreu against his former partners in the Coalition" and had "associated Britain with what is everywhere condemned as Fascist action."

The tale was taken up in the United States with further embroidery. Here, proclaimed American correspondents, was a flagrant instance of power politics—Britain's imperialist designs were at the root of it all. These views were re-echoed by critics at home. Ernest Bevin was invited to explain what he meant by his reference to British interests in the Mediterranean area.

The British Left Wing, which had taken a starkly realist line over the Polish question, were swept off their emotional balance by events in Greece. Members of E.L.A.S. could not more forcibly have maintained the inalienable right of Greek to cut the throat of Greek. British soldiers, who had looked upon the painful duty of intervention as the sole and timely means by which Athens had been spared the horrors of massacre, were surprised and pained to find themselves depicted as the instruments for the oppression of Greek democrats.

A motion of censure on the Government was tabled regretting that the King's Speech contained no assurance that his Majesty's Forces "will not be used to disarm the friends of democracy in Greece and in other parts of Europe, or to suppress those popular movements which have valorously assisted in the defeat of the enemy and upon whose success we must rely for future friendly co-operation in Europe."

The debate (Dec. 8-9) was lively. Tempers were strained. On one side hearts ran away with heads, on both sides heat envenomed tongues.

The Prime Minister came down to the House plainly spoiling for the fight. He was in no mood to reason, persuade, convert, convince. His policy had been traduced and on retaliation bent, he laid about him at his traducers.

Seymour Cocks, moving the amendment of censure, declared that he was only a humble back-bencher and the Prime Minister was a great national figure crowned with the glory of achievement. Yet, as a back-bencher, he would rather his right hand were burnt off at the wrists, leaving a twisted and blackened stump, than that he should sign an order to the British Army to fire on the workers of Greece.

Richard Acland, the Commonwealth leader, seconding, asked : "Are we to commit ourselves to a stark, slogging struggle, policing, arresting, confiscating and imprisoning and burning villages in order to stamp out a popular movement?"

The Prime Minister, in his reply, dealt with the several cases in Europe in which his policy had been assailed—Spain, Belgium and Italy as well as Greece. He began by defining the charge made against the Administration—that they were using the Forces of the Crown to disarm the friends of democracy. How was "democracy" to be interpreted? The plain, humble common man was the foundation of democracy, who fought for his country in time of trouble and who at the appropriate time went to the poll to choose his Parliamentary representative. "If that," proclaimed Winston, "is democracy, I salute it, I espouse it, I would work for it."

Emmanuel Shinwell here interjected the terse query, "In Spain?"

The Prime Minister : "It is one of the gross misrepresentations in which a certain class of people indulge that I have spoken praising words about Franco. All I said was that Spanish politics did not merely consist of the drawing of rude cartoons about him. It is really of no use for my friend to screw his face up as if he were taking a nasty dose of medicine, I expect there are some other nasty gulps to swallow."

While he stood for democracy, Winston felt quite differently about a swindle democracy, a democracy which called itself so merely because it was Left Wing. He did not allow a party or body to call themselves democrats merely because they were stretching farther and farther into the more extreme form of revolution. The last thing that resembled democracy was mob law, with bands of gangsters, armed with deadly weapons, forcing their way into great cities, endeavouring to introduce a totalitarian régime.

Here there were, cries of dissent and interruption from the Socialist benches. "I am sorry," commented Winston, "to be

causing so much distress. I have plenty of time and if any outrages are wrung from members opposite, I can always take a little longer time over what I have to say."

Democracy was no harlot to be picked up in the street by a man with a machine-gun. When countries were liberated it did not follow that those who had received weapons from Britain should use them in order to engross to themselves by violence and murder and bloodshed all these powers and traditions which many countries had slowly developed. Valorous elements might have done good service, but it was for the State and not for them to judge what should be their rewards. It was not for them to claim ownership of the State.

Belgium was a case of what the censure termed the friends of democracy being disarmed. Events in Belgium had borne some similarity to those in Greece. In November a putsch against the Pierlot Government had been planned by "the friends of democracy, the valorous assisters in defeat of the enemy. Heavily armed they came by lorry. The Belgian Government made an official appeal for Allied support and the necessary measures were taken by SHAEF, British troops being ordered to stop the lorries and disarm the occupants. Personally," said Winston, "I consider that Gen Eisenhower's decisions were absolutely right and that they stopped disorder and tumult along the lines of our communications."

Aneurin Bevan intervened to ask : "Is it not a fact that the military authorities in Belgium were satisfied that the Belgian Prime Minister unwarrantedly asked for the intervention of British troops. Does not all the evidence now coming forward go to show that there was no such threat as the right hon. gentleman pretends?"

The Prime Minister : I should think it hardly possible to state the opposite of the truth with more precision.

Aneurin Bevan : Where is the evidence ?

The Prime Minister : I back up those who seek to establish democracy and civilization. . . . (Interruption.) Mr. Bevan must learn to take as well as to give. There is no one more free with interruptions, taunts and jibes than he is. He need not get so angry because the House laughs at him—he ought to be pleased when they only laugh.

Next there was the case of Italy—"which is, I gather, oddly enough embodied in the case of Count Sforza." It was untrue that the Allies had put any veto on Sforza becoming Premier of Italy —there was no power to stop such a choice. But Sforza was not a man they trusted, he was not looked on as true and trustworthy, and there would not be the slightest confidence in any Italian Government of which he was a dominating member.

What was the reason for the prejudice ? At the time of the Italian surrender, Winston explained, Sforza was living in America

and was anxious to get back to Italy. He sent a message to Badoglio offering support and confirmed this offer to the United States in the specific statement, "So long as Marshal Badoglio is engaged in that task (of driving out the Germans) I consider it criminal to do anything to weaken his position or hamper his work. I am prepared to offer my full support so long as he is thus engaged, all the more because it is the only way to destroy the last criminal remnants of Fascism."

The Prime Minister, anxious to ascertain if this was the Count's sincere resolve, had an interview with him in London. "I went through this letter with him line by line and he assured me that it represented his most profound convictions. No sooner, however, had he got back to Italy, than he began that long series of intrigues which ended in the expulsion of Marshal Badoglio from office. Many may be glad of this, but it is not the point I am considering. The point is whether he did not most completely and without explanation depart at a very early date from the solemn undertaking he gave and without which we should have had power to convince our American friends that it would not have been a good thing for him to go back."

Mr Bowles : But the right hon. gentleman supported Mussolini

The Prime Minister . In 1928. I certainly did in the sense of making speeches to say that it was a very good thing that Italy was not plunged into Bolshevism

Emmanuel Shinwell : Where was your democracy then ?

The Prime Minister : It was because of armed violence threatened by one side and armed violence being used against it by the other.

Mr McGovern : You thought that Fascism was better ?

The Prime Minister : I am not a bit afraid of anything I may have said in a long political life. I certainly thought at that particular time that the kind of régime then set up in Italy was better than a general slump in Italy into the furious Bolshevik Civil War which was raging in many other parts of Europe. I never see the slightest good in going back on what you have said and the hon. member himself has views of his own which seem to be equally obnoxious to all parties in the House.

Resuming his account of events in Italy, the Prime Minister said that Badoglio fell a victim to Sforza's intrigues and a six-party Government was formed under Bonomi—none of the parties had the slightest electoral foundation. The British Government did its best to support Bonomi's Ministry. "I travelled to Italy and interviewed Signor Bonomi and others and took the greatest trouble to draw up a series of mitigations in the treatment of Italy by the victorious Allies. These I proposed by telegraph to the President and when we met at Quebec, and when I stayed with him at his

home at Hyde Park, we framed a joint declaration to give Italians a good chance of playing their part as co-belligerents." The six parties in Italy since then had had another contention and Bonomi had formed another Government of four out of the six parties.

Finally the Prime Minister came to Greece—the mainspring of the vote of censure. He described how in consultation with President Roosevelt, plans were drawn up, endorsed at the Quebec conference, for the sending of a British force to Athens, when the Germans had been expelled, to pave the way for the commencement of relief, and for the establishment of law and order. These plans had necessarily to be matured in secret and were unknown to M. Papandreu, who, in fact, had appealed in the name of the Government for such help to be rendered.

For two years past forces of E.L.A.S. had been planning the seizure of power by armed force. During the years of Greek captivity E.L.A.S. had devoted far more attention to beating up and destroying representatives of E.D.E.S. than they had to attacking the Germans.

"We came to Greece, with American and Russian consent, at the invitation of the Greek government of all parties bearing with us such good gifts as liberty, order, food and the assurance of an absolute right for the Greeks to determine their own future as soon as conditions of normal tranquillity were regained . . . However, events began to move. The carefully prepared forces of E.L.A.S. began to infiltrate into Athens and into the Piraeus. Other bodies began to move down from the northern hills towards the city. The six E.A.M. Ministers resigned from the Government at this timely moment. One gentleman, I believe, was a little slow, but on being rung upon the telephone and told he would be killed if he did not come out, he made haste to follow the general practice. The intention of the friends of democracy, who now entered the city, was to overthrow by violence the constitutional government of Greece, and install themselves, without anything in the nature of an election, as the violent expression of the people's will. I repudiate as I have said the idea that democracy can stand upon a seizure of power by unrepresentative men or that it can be maintained by terrorism and the killing of political opponents. No doubt there are others who have a different view.

"I directed Gen. Scobie, who has shown very great qualities of sobriety, poise and at the same time of martial vigour, to assume complete control of Athens and the district and to use whatever force might be necessary, to drive out and extirpate the E.L.A.S. bands by which the capital had by then become infested. If I am blamed for this action I will gladly accept any dismissal at the hands of the House. But if I am not so dismissed—make no mistake about it—we shall persist in this policy of cleaning Athens and the Athens

region of all who are rebels against the authority of the constitutional Government of Greece—of mutineers against the supreme commander in the Mediterranean under whom all the guerillas have undertaken to serve.”

In the debate that followed the charges against Winston were amplified and extended. It was variously asserted that he was encouraging counter-revolution on the Continent as a matter of policy ; that under the guise of disarming the guerillas he was attempting to foist on the Greeks an unwanted and discredited monarch and the old unwanted and discredited politicians with the old totalitarian discipline. The Prime Minister was informed that he was overfond of war and that the British people had their plate full, with Germany and Japan and so had no wish to be involved in a war with the Greeks. It was suggested, constructively, as a means of ending the fighting that a minister of high standing should go out to Greece—it was a big, human problem, needing a man with a big heart and a big mind.

When the division was taken the censure motion was defeated by 279 votes to 30. Winston had the better of the division and the fighting honours of the debate. It was but a limited and melancholy satisfaction. The situation in Greece remained. Greek was killing Greek in a lamentable civil war, and British forces were suffering casualties, some killed or wounded by the underhand methods of the guerillas. More damage was being inflicted on Athens, it was reported, than had been caused by the Germans throughout their period of occupation.

Then at Christmas came the announcement that the British Prime Minister was in Athens, accompanied by the Foreign Secretary. Once again, after defying his critics, Winston had shown himself ready to profit by the advice they had urged upon him. It was a venturesome mission for a septuagenarian Minister to undertake in dead of winter, involving a flight of no little hazard across Europe. On a Christmas Day that found Athens without Christmas cheer, Winston arrived out of an icy blue sky. Arrangements were at once put in hand for the calling on the morrow of an all-party conference to end fratricidal strife.

During the late hours of the night, the discovery was made of a dynamite plot that would have sent the Hotel Grande Bretagne to the skies with all its occupants, including Papandreou and members of his ministry and Gen. Scobie and members of his staff. In a sewer outside the hotel the guard going the rounds discovered three-quarters of a ton of explosive of German origin. A wire to detonate the dynamite had been placed in position but the plotters had been disturbed and had fled, leaving some cases of explosive outside the sewer. Greek and Briton reckoned it an act of providence that this new gunpowder plot had been detected in time.

Later that Boxing Day the Prime Minister was present with Mr. Secretary Eden at the opening of the all-party conference. Delegates in overcoats shivered as they waited in the conference hall, for the arrival of the E.L.A.S. representatives, who, with safe conducts, had been conveyed to the meeting-place by armoured car.

The venerable Archbishop of Athens, a stately black-coated figure, opened the proceedings. Then Winston spoke. He first made it clear that his presence there was not to be taken as a sign that the British Government had found the restoring of order in Greece a task beyond their power. If a settlement were not reached the British would discharge their part of the duty of rescuing Athens from anarchy. Apart from that there was no intention of interfering in Greek affairs. Whether Greece was to be a monarchy or a republic was a matter for Greeks alone. It was the British Government's hope that there might be established a broad-based Greek Government possessed of sufficient armed power in a Greek national army and with Greek police to preserve itself in Athens until a free general election could be held.

"All we want from the Greeks," he declared, "is our ancient friendship. I exhort you to believe that I speak on behalf of my Government and that I speak the truth from my heart. My hope is that this conference will restore Greece once again to her former state and power among the Allies."

When the British Ministers withdrew, the Greeks, by the light of flickering hurricane lamps, to the sound of intermittent and not very distant firing, began the discussion of their differences. It was the first time they had met since hostilities had broken out. Passions were inflamed. Four hours of discussion produced little more than expressions of recrimination. The conference was resumed the following day and the first heat of anger having exhausted itself, the first tentative steps were taken towards a settlement. Archbishop Damaskinos was able to report to the Prime Minister that on one point opinion at the conference was overwhelmingly clear—that the establishment of a Regency was the essential preliminary to the ending of Greece's troubles.

So, the British Ministers left for home undertaking to urge King George of the Hellenes to agree to the appointment of a Regent. The conference was adjourned indefinitely. Suspicions between the rival parties were by no means allayed. The Leftists regarded the demand for the laying down of arms as the preliminary for a dictatorship of the Right. The Government parties looked on the demands of E.L.A.S. as the means for bringing about a Communist régime. And the fighting still proceeded, as Gen. Scobie continued the process of clearing Athens and the Piraeus of insurgent forces.

Nevertheless the Prime Minister's mission brought peace to

Greece He saw King George of the Hellenes, who, on the last day of the year, issued a proclamation declaring his resolve not to return to Athens unless summoned by a free and fair expression of the national will and appointing Archbishop Damaskinos as Regent. A new Government was formed under Gen. Plastiras, a life-long Republican, and on January 11th an agreement was signed for the ending of the civil war.

Six days previously Gen. Scobie had reported that he had cleared Athens and the Piraeus of the insurgents. In the fighting, British forces suffered 2,100 casualties, of which 237 were fatal. Even after the cease-fire, E.L.A.S. carted off as hostages many thousands of innocent men and women. This barbarity was condemned by the British Government and by Archbishop Damaskinos. The General Committee of the Greek Socialist Party withdrew from E.A.M., dissociating itself from E.A.M.'s actions and denouncing the civil war as "organized solely by the deadly enemies of our country, contrary to the interests of Greek workers and to the anti-Fascist goal of the United Nations." The Union of Popular Democrats also withdrew from E.A.M., strongly protesting against the excesses and violence of the civil war. Officials of seventeen Greek Trade Unions expressed their thanks to the British Ambassador (Mr. Leeper, whom Left Wingers at home had attacked), on behalf of the workers of Greece for deliverance from the tyranny of the Communist Party.

When the House met in the New Year, another debate on foreign affairs was devoted to events in Greece. It was opened by the Prime Minister, who, by then, was in a position to give an account of affairs based on the patient investigations he had made on the spot.

What he had learned had led him, he said, to a strengthening of his original conclusions—that the E.L.A.S. bands, at any rate for the past two years, had played very little part against the Germans. "I must speak a little about these Greek Communists. They are a very formidable people. They have a theme and policy which they pursue by merciless methods. I have been told I made a mistake in underrating the power of the Communist-controlled E.L.A.S. I must admit I judged them on their form against the Germans. I do not wish to do them any military injustice. It was not against the Germans they were trying to fight to any extent. They were simply taking our arms, lying low and awaiting the moment when they could seize power in the capital by force or intrigue and make Greece a Communist state with the totalitarian liquidation of all opponents.

"While working in the Papandreu Government the E.A.M. and Communist Ministers were working in the closest combination with the forces gathering to destroy it. They did their best to hamper

the landing and distribution of food by provoking strikes on "some occasions."

Of the actual events of the rising, the Prime Minister gave a detailed account. On the night of December 4-5th, E.L.A.S. forces and Communists advanced into Athens to within 1,000 yards of the centre of Greek Government in the Hotel Grande Brétagne and even nearer to the British Embassy. It seemed that the over-running of these places by a ferocious, well-armed and well-directed mob ("or army if you like") was about to take place.

Almost all the police stations had been occupied or stormed by E.L.A.S. forces, some with the slaughter of every inmate. Gen. Scobie signalled "A general strike has been declared in Athens. All power and utility services have ceased working. Unless full order can be restored, the safety of the Government will be critical. All British troops, including the Parachute Brigade, are being held here." British troops were about to have been sent away from Greece at this time, the Parachute Brigade to Italy, where it was needed. Gen. Scobie was given orders to take any measures needed to restore order.

"If that were wrong," declared Winston, "I take the full responsibility, but my colleagues are most desirous to share it with me. For three or four days or more it was a struggle to prevent a hideous massacre in which all forms of government would have been swept away and triumphant Trotskyism installed. However, by the skin of our teeth and thanks to the resolution of a handful of British soldiers on the spot, Athens and, as I firmly believe, Greek freedom were saved."

Winston brought home to some, at least of his hearers, the difficulties of the Greek political situation, the extreme bitternesses and hatreds that were obstacles to the formation and functioning of an all-party Government in Athens. "People here," he said, "talk of everyone being persuaded to fall upon each other's necks, or, at any rate, to work together in a sensible manner. I must admit that I had some of these ideas when I flew to Athens, but the House must not suppose that in these foreign lands matters are settled as they would be here in England. . . . Here it is hard enough to keep a Coalition together, even between men who, although divided by party, have a supreme object and so much else in common. But imagine what the difficulties are in countries racked by civil war past or impending and where clusters of petty parties have each their own set of appetites, misdeeds or revenges.

"If I had driven the wife of the deputy Prime Minister out to die in the snow, if the Minister of Labour had kept the Foreign Secretary in exile for a great many years, if the Chancellor of the Exchequer had shot at and wounded the Secretary for War, if we who sit here together had back-bitten and double-crossed each

other while pretending to work together, and had all put our own group or party first and the country nowhere, and all set ideologies, slogans and labels in front of comprehensions, comradeship and duty, we should certainly, to put it at the mildest, have come to a general election much sooner than we shall. When men have wished very much to kill each other and have feared very much that they will be killed quite soon it is not possible the next day for them to work together as friends. We must recognize the difference between our affairs and those which prevailed in Athens."

There was no case, in his experience, he summed up, where a British Government had been so maligned and its motives so traduced in our own country by important organs of the Press or among our own people. "How can we wonder, still less complain, of the attitude of hostile or indifferent newspapers in the United States of America, when we have in this country witnessed such a melancholy exhibition as that provided by some of our time-honoured and most responsible journals and others to which such epithets would hardly apply."

Animosities in Greece still found their echoes in the House. Though Arthur Greenwood, as spokesman for the Socialists, deplored the action of E.L.A.S. in carrying off hostages as "repugnant to all the instincts of the British people," Left Wing critics maintained their advocacy of E.L.A.S.

Richard Acland moved a vote of censure on the Government and portrayed the Prime Minister as an atrocity-monger. In yet more extravagant language Aneurin Bevan described the Prime Minister's statement about forces marching on Athens to massacre the population as a "grotesque piece of Churchillian rubbish," and his speech as that of a "swashbuckler".

Only seven members could be found to support the censure motion on this second time of asking. The Government vote was 340.

To round off this record of the storm over Greece, it may be fitting to record the judgment on events passed by investigators of the Left who made the journey to Greece to find out for themselves where the truth lay. First there is the testimony of Mr. Gerald Barry, editor of the *News Chronicle*, who, when the controversy was at its height, himself left his editorial chair to make an inquiry on the spot. He did not agree with the Government for its handling of the long series of events that led up to the crisis, but as to the actual incidents of December he wrote :

"Given the situation with which the British authorities and Greek Government found themselves confronted on December 5, they acted in the only possible way. What is more, it deserves to be recorded that the British Army under General Scobie's command, is performing a highly exacting task with imagination, discretion and brilliant efficiency. . . . The shootings and the taking of

hostages are now admitted by responsible E.A.M.-ites themselves to have been unpardonable. They explain them but do not attempt to excuse them. . . . The majority of British soldiers like and respect the Greeks, but detest E L A.S. The exhumed corpses, the ill-treatment of hostages and some prisoners have soured their gall. There is no doubt about the reality of the corpses nor about the means by which most of them met their death, nor about the ill-treatment of hostages. Even these shocking events and the horror they properly created are not to be entirely dismissed in the terms of the devil versus virtue.” Mr. Barry went on in his articles, which won the praise of his fellow journalists, to argue that much of the trouble was due to the belief in Greece that the British Prime Minister and Government were ranged in support of the Greek monarchy.

From the Liberal, we turn to the Labour testimony. Under its Secretary, Sir Walter Citrine, a T U C. delegation went out to Greece. Members found the truth not easily to be ascertainable and, so far as the Greek Labour movement was concerned, they were told that some of the blanks in the record were to be attributed to the fact that one hundred and fourteen trade union officers had been killed by the Red Fascists who, by force of arms, had taken possession of the trade union offices when the Germans retreated from Athens.

As to atrocities, the delegation reported that horrible accounts were given to them of terrorism by a section of E.L.A.S. named O P.L A. The delegates themselves saw the bodies of 250 persons (“there were still many trenches to be opened”), practically all, if not all, of whom had been the victims of organized murder. Delegates were informed by the Regent that “as far as they could estimate, the number of persons murdered was at least 10,000.” The treatment of hostages by E.L.A.S. was rigorous and cruel.

Finally, there was the information given to the delegation by members of the British Forces and 500 troops of the Parachute Division. “The answers given by the soldiers confirmed beyond any doubt whatever that there was a deep sense of grievance against certain sections of the British Press and particular members of Parliament ; that it was grotesque to describe what had taken place in Greece as that of reluctant troops on the side of reaction against a democratic people. . . . In the view of these troops E L A S. was more concerned with returning to Athens to seize power than with fighting the Germans. We were impressed with the universal opinion of these British troops and of many others whom we consulted that had they not been ordered into action there would have been wholesale massacre in Athens.” Summing up on this point, the T.U.C. delegates declared their opinion that “when the full history of this struggle has been written the people of our country

will be proud of the courage, cheerfulness, restraint and steadfast behaviour of our forces in Greece in circumstances of the greatest difficulty."

## CHAPTER XIII

*Ideals at Yalta*

IN February, 1945, Winston Churchill, President Roosevelt and Premier Stalin assembled at Yalta for the decisive conference of the war. Their task was to concert the final plans for victory and to lay the foundations of the post-war world—to provide for the military occupation of Germany; to settle the controversial issues of the frontiers of Poland and the future Government of that and the other liberated states; and to dispose of the outstanding questions affecting the new world organization for security.

They carried through their long agenda to a successful conclusion. On all points an agreement was reached. It seemed that the major political problems of peace, even before the peace, had found their answer.

Since then the glory of the Crimea Conference has faded. Settlements on some political issues appeared later to have settled nothing. Yet though some differences were no more than shelved, Yalta must still be credited with the major achievement of concerting the measures for enforcing victory on the vanquished. In intangibles, too, the Crimea Conference was fruitful, achieving a vast clearance of suspicion and mistrust that had been generated since the Teheran meeting fourteen months before. We should remember, as Anthony Eden bade the House remember, the state of Allied relations as they appeared before the Crimea Conference and the improvement that Yalta brought about. For the intangible contribution of goodwill the Prime Minister ("on whom the heaviest burden fell") strove without remission and strove with success.

Winston found himself at Yalta in his accustomed war-time role of middleman and mediator between the heads of the great republics of the Old World and the New. Long-standing Russian mistrust of the states of the West was paralleled by deep-rooted American suspicions of Russia, that "flushed with the magnificent triumphs of her armies, she was dreaming dreams of European domination." There was the danger that both republics might close the door on international co-operation and, in rigid isolationism, pursue their own policies. It was Winston's aim that the concert of nations which had brought victory in sight, should be maintained to ensure the gathering of victory's fruits.

Before the opening of the Conference, President and Prime Minister held a preliminary meeting at Malta. Winston was the first to arrive with the British and United States delegations. Talks took place aboard ship : "There was a diplomatic conference proceeding in one cruiser, a military discussion in another, and discussions on shipping in a third vessel." Winston, as he modestly phrased it, "kept in touch with what was going on."

Then the President arrived by cruiser (February 2nd) and a plenary session of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was held to give approval to the military plans for the final blows in the West that had been carefully worked out. Then shipping arrangements had to be considered—a complicated matter "like making an international Bradshaw in which the times of all the express trains may have to be varied if half-a-dozen unforeseen contingencies arise." Here complications had flowed from the postponement of victory beyond 1944, as had been the expectation at Quebec. The consequence was that there was an overlapping of the maximum requirements for operations in Europe and in the Far East—a double peak period in the two wars. These matters provided for, President and Prime Minister flew on to the Crimea.

Their Russian hosts neglected no preparation that would promote the cordiality of the Allied delegations. The ruins of Yalta were eloquent on behalf of the Russians. The old-time Czarist resort on the Black Sea Riviera had been used during the enemy occupation by German officers, and when they moved out the German soldiery indulged in their national pastime of destruction. The President was appalled by what he saw, for he had been preserved, for the most part, from actual contact with the wastage of war. In his last message to Congress he made the ruins of Yalta bear testimony against the Hun and his senseless, reckless fury. "I had read about Warsaw, Lidice, Rotterdam and Coventry, but I saw Sevastopol and Yalta, and I knew there is not enough room left on earth for militarism and Christian decency."

Winston, too, noted the destruction, but he had been no stranger to such scenes, and made the comment that there were "the fields and shattered dwellings of the Crimea across which twice the armies have surged in deadly combat." Winston noted, too, that for the reception of the guests the dwellings had been restored to good order and that "accommodation and comfort had been provided in the true style of Russian hospitality."

The Russians, indeed, provided a palace apiece for the reception of the delegations. The President was accorded the Livadia Palace, where Czars of all the Russias had once found summer relaxation. Winston was given quarters in the Vorontsov Palace. Premier Stalin took up his residence in what had been the Palace of Prince Yousourov.

Quartered in this princely fashion, meeting in the serene and effulgent glow of expected and imminent victory, the Allied Chiefs had no difficulty in disposing of the military, and non-controversial, items of their agenda. Final plans against the Germans—here it was a matter of the timing and the interlocking of the attacks from East and West. "Nazi Germany is doomed," proclaimed the official statement on the proceedings—there was no difference about that. "It is our inflexible purpose to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world"—there was no difference about that. The Allies after victory would each occupy a separate zone of Germany—agreed; France to be invited to take a zone—agreed. Germany to make reparation, and for the assessment thereof a Compensation for Damage Commission to be set up—agreed.

The political problems bristled with contention. There was the vexatious question of Poland, crucial point for the Russians, who were desirous that the President as well as the Prime Minister should give their endorsement to the frontiers they proposed. There was the future government of Poland and of liberated states in the Balkans. Here there was suspicion of Russian intentions, and assurances were sought that the peoples should be free to make their own choice. There was, further, a clash of views over the world security organization and the part that the major Powers should play in making this new League effective. Was it to be a League based on a big three régime as the Russians conceived it; or was it to conform with the democratic ideas of the Western Allies?

Roosevelt had no liking for the suggested settlement over Poland, with its transfer of territories from Poles to Russians and from Germans to Poles. He gave his assent, though still hesitantly, to the scheme. "I did not agree with all of it by any means," he told Congress later, "but we could go as far as Britain wanted in certain areas, as far as Russia wanted in certain areas, and as far as I wanted in certain areas. It was a compromise."

Over the future government of the Liberation States the President had had his misgivings. He had been uneasy over the "queer ideas of spheres of influence" which appeared to be developing. He drew up a formula designed to assure to the liberated peoples freedom to choose the Government under which they would live, in accordance with the principles of the Atlantic Charter.

The declaration on Liberated Europe, to which the three leaders subscribed, proclaimed that the establishment of order in Europe and the rebuilding of national economic life "must be achieved by processes which will enable the liberated peoples to destroy the last vestiges of Nazism and Fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice." The three signatories undertook that

their Governments would jointly assist the freed peoples to establish conditions of peace ; carry out emergency measures of relief ; form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements and pledged to the earliest possible establishment, through free elections, of governments responsive to the will of the people ; and, finally, facilitate the holding of such elections. When action became necessary in any state under this declaration, the three Governments would "immediately consult together on the measures necessary to discharge the joint responsibilities here set forth."

It was an all-embracing declaration and seemed fairly to provide against those "spheres of influence" which had aroused the President's misgivings. Fortunately for the harmony of Yalta it was not thought necessary to supplement the declaration by a definition of its terms, in particular to lay down a standard of "democratic principles." Winston, at least, was conscious of the omission. When he reported to the House later, he posed the question, "What are democratic parties?" and gave the reply, "People always take different views. Even in our own country there has been from time to time a feeble effort by one party or another to claim that they are the true democratic parties and that the rest are either Bolsheviks or Tory landlords."

The President also had his formula for settling the difference on voting that had arisen at Dumbarton Oaks on the new League of Nations. The Russians had argued that the effectiveness of the United Nations Organization would be impaired if the authority of the smaller states approximated to that of the major Powers Britain and the United States were of the contrary opinion—that the effectiveness of the new League would suffer if the authority of the smaller states were to be depressed. At Yalta, Premier Stalin found it possible to accept the compromise formula that the President brought with him from the State Department. While it raised the authority of the smaller states it did not depress the authority of the greater Powers further than Stalin was prepared to go. So the functional voting arrangement was sent on to San Francisco for endorsement.

At later conferences Russian representatives were to be accused of a rigid no-compromise method of negotiation. At Yalta their diplomacy was more subtle. They compromised on the intangible and imprecise and endorsed the formulæ of the President. On the tangible and precise question of territorial adjustments in Poland, they secured endorsement for their aims. The tangible and precise frontiers were enforced. On other matters, the future was to reveal how imprecise some of the intangibles were.

The Crimea Conference ended on a sustained note of cordiality. The three chiefs parted on the best of terms. They were saluted

with almost universal encomiums in the Allied Press. For once the varied voices of the United States were raised in almost unanimous salutation of the President and the conference. *Izvestia* testified to its readers that Yalta would go down to history as the meeting which numbered the days of Hitlerite Germany and opened the greatest possibility in the whole story of mankind for creating a long and durable peace. French resentment at exclusion from the Crimea Conference was mollified by satisfaction that France was to be accorded a zone of Germany for occupation.

Gratified by this pæan of applause, the three leaders found the most solid testimony to their work in the howl of abuse from the Nazis, who frenziedly denounced the "Magna Carta of European misery" and the Yalta plans for "mass murder."

Winston could leave the Crimea with the feeling that he had laboured as mediator with success. The United States would not, as when Germany was first defeated in 1918, relapse into isolationism. When the President came to sum up the results of Yalta in his last message to Congress, he was to declare: "Responsibility for political conditions thousands of miles away can no longer be avoided, I think, by this great nation . . . The Conference in the Crimea was a turning point, I hope, in our history and therefore in the history of the world. . . . We shall have to take the responsibility for world collaboration or we shall have to bear the responsibility for another world conflict"

As to the Russians, the impression Winston gained at Yalta was, as from all his other contacts with Marshal Stalin, that the Soviet leaders "wished to live in honourable friendship and equality with the Western democracies."

The newspapers that announced the fruits of Yalta to the world also reported the conclusion of an agreement in Athens between E.L.A.S. and the Greek Government. Hard upon this came the news that the Prime Minister had paid a further visit to Greece (February 14th), to mark the final stage in the winding up of the civil war to which his mission at Christmas had contributed the initial movement.

The Greeks now gave him a great reception, voted him the freedom of Athens and renamed a street in his honour. A vast crowd of 25,000 gathered in Constitution Square to hear him speak. The Regent Archbishop stood at his side, with Anthony Eden, and the entire Greek Cabinet were present on the terrace of the old Palace. His speech, according to the reports, was "punctuated with applause" and no cheer was louder than when he expressed his pride as an Englishman on the part the British Army had played in protecting the immortal city.

Winston pronounced this to be the high spot of his visits in the Near East. "I could not help recalling," he said (speech to the

House, February 27th), "the grave conditions of my visit <sup>only</sup> seven weeks before when the cannon were firing close at hand and bullets shook the walls and people were killed and wounded in the streets not far away. The contrast between these violent scenes and the rapturous welcome we received from the vast crowds of citizens was one of the most vivid impressions and agreeable experiences of my life. Peace reigned over the beautiful immortal city. Its citizens were wild with joy. The Archbishop was seated in the Regency firmly grasping the reins of power. Together (with Anthony Eden) we drove through the crowded streets lined by the first instalment of the new National Greek Army, until I found myself called upon to address what was incomparably the largest and most enthusiastic gathering that in a very long experience of such demonstrations I have ever seen."

From Greece the Prime Minister flew on to Egypt to confer further with Mr. Roosevelt. The war in the Far East was the subject of their four hours' talk. The President had taken the opportunity of the stay in the Near East to meet three kings of the Orient—King Farouk of Egypt, Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia, and Ibn Saud, King of Saudi Arabia. Winston also made use of the occasion to see these rulers and President Shukri of Syria and before passing on, he reviewed with them the many matters of common concern.

He was interested to meet in the flesh the historical figure of Haile Selassie, "first victim of Mussolini's lust for conquest." Of greater import were the discussions with Ibn Saud, whom he entertained to lunch in the Fayoum Oasis, and whose co-operation would be essential when a settlement was to be made of the vexed question of Palestine's future. With President Shukri, the Prime Minister discussed the position of the French in the Middle East. In some circles in France there were suspicions about Britain's intentions over Syria and the Lebanon. Winston made it clear that it was not the Government's policy to seek to supplant French interests, and at his meeting with President Shukri he did his best "to enjoin a friendly attitude towards the French."

When he gave the House an account of these meetings he took the opportunity to remove misconceptions in France—so far as these misconceptions could be removed by a statement. "We are determined," he said, "to respect the independence of these states (in the Levant) and in view of the many cultural and historical connections which France has so long established with Syria to use our best endeavours so that it may be possible for the French to preserve that special position. We trust that these states will be firmly established by the authority of the world organization and that French privilege will also be recognized. However, I must make it clear that it is not for us alone to defend by force either

Syrian or Lebanese independence or French privilege. We seek both and do not believe that they are incompatible. Too much must not be placed on the shoulders of Great Britain alone and we have to take notice of the fact that Russia and the United States have recognized and favour Syrian and Lebanese independence, but do not favour any special position for any other foreign country."

On his return home, Winston gave further indication of his solicitude for the French. Exclusion from Yalta was still causing a hangover of resentment in Paris. President Roosevelt had invited de Gaulle to meet him at Algiers, but the General tartly replied that pressure of affairs necessitated his presence in Paris, "particularly on the morrow of the Three Power Conference at which France was not represented." So Winston sent an invitation to Paris for the Foreign Minister, Bidault, to come to London. From the Prime Minister and Mr. Secretary Eden, Bidault was given an account in detail of the subjects dealt with at Yalta. It was another contribution to the promotion of Anglo-French friendship.

The Crimea Conference decisions and declarations came up for judgment in Parliament to be given an emphatic endorsement. The Government motion in the Commons invited approval, in particular, of the measures for maintaining unity of action between the Powers "not only in achieving the final defeat of the enemy, but thereafter in peace as in war." The Prime Minister went over the Yalta decisions detail by detail—Poland, Greece, Liberation States and the rest—but it was on the longer term policy for peace in the years to come that he placed the emphasis of his observations. On the new security organization, the hopes of the world rested for the future ; its success was dependent on the major Powers.

"Here is the difficulty to be faced," he said, dealing with the disputed question of voting procedure. "It is on the Great Powers that the chief burden of maintaining peace and security will fall. The new organization must take into account the special responsibility of the Great Powers and must be so framed as not to compromise their unity, or capacity for effective action if it is called for at a short notice. At the same time the world organization cannot be based upon a dictatorship of the Great Powers. It is their duty to serve the world and not to rule it. We trust that the voting procedure on which we agreed at Yalta meets these two essential points and provides a system which is fair and acceptable. . . .

"It is to this strongly armed body that we look to prevent wars of aggression and the preparation for such wars, and to enable disputes between states, both great and small, to be adjusted by peaceful and lawful means, by persuasion, by the pressure of public opinion, by legal method and eventually by another category of method which constitutes the principle of this new organization. The former League of Nations, so hardly used and found to be

inadequate for the tasks it attempted, will be replaced by a far stronger body, in which the United States will play a vitally important part. It will embody much of the structure and characteristics of its predecessor.

"All the work that has been done in the past, all the experience that has been gathered by the working of the League of Nations, will not be cast away. But the new body will differ from it on the essential point—it will not shrink from establishing its will against the evil-doer or evil-planner, in good time, by force of arms. This organization, which is capable of continuous progress and development, is at any rate appropriate to the phase in which the world will enter after our present enemies have been beaten down. We may have good hopes and more than hopes that it will shield humanity from a third renewal of its agonies."

"We have all been made aware in the interval between the two world wars of the weaknesses of international bodies whose work is seriously complicated by the misfortune which occurred in the building of the Tower of Babel. Taught by bitter experience, we now hope to make the world conscious of the strength of the new instrument and of the protection it will be able to afford to all who wish to dwell in peace within their habitations. This new world structure will from the outset and in all parts of its work be aided to the utmost by the ordinary channels of friendly diplomatic intercourse, which it in no way supersedes."

With earnestness and eloquence the Prime Minister commended to the House the decisions which had been taken for the future territories and the Government of Poland. He declared his faith in the sincerity of Russian intentions over which Tory doubts persisted. "It is a case," he declared, "which I can outline with great confidence to the House. An impartial line, traced long ago by an international Commission in which Britain took a leading part; the moderation with which the Russians have strictly confined themselves to that line; the enormous sacrifices they have made and the sufferings they have undergone; the contributions they have made to our present victory; the vital interest which Poland has in complete agreement with her neighbour to the East—when you consider all these matters and the temperate and patient manner in which they have been put forward and discussed, I say that I have rarely seen a case in the House which I could commend with more confidence to the good sense of members of all sides.

"Even more important than the frontiers of Poland is the freedom of Poland. The home of the Poles is settled. Are they to be masters in their own house? Are they to be free as we in Britain and the United States or France are free? Is sovereignty and independence to be untramelled or are they to become a mere projection of the

Soviet States, forced against their will by an armed minority to adopt a Communist or totalitarian system? I am putting the case in all its bluntness. It is a touchstone far more sensitive and vital than the drawing of frontier lines.

"Most solemn declarations have been made by Marshal Stalin and the Soviet Union that the sovereign independence of Poland is to be maintained and this decision is now joined in both by Britain and the United States. Here also the world organization will in due course assume a measure of responsibility.

"The Poles will have their future in their own hands, with the single limitation that they must honestly follow in harmony with the Allies a policy friendly to Russia."

The Prime Minister then declared his faith in the intentions of the Premier Stalin and the Russian leaders. "I feel that their word is their bond. I know of no Government which stands to its obligations, even in its own despite, more solidly than the Russian Government. I decline absolutely to embark upon a discussion about Russian good faith. It is quite evident that these matters touch the whole future of the world. Sombre indeed would be the fortunes of mankind if some awful situation arose between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union, if the future world organization were rent asunder and a new cataclysm of inconceivable violence destroyed all that is left of the treasures and liberties of mankind."

The Prime Minister paid a handsome tribute to the services of the Foreign Secretary ("his breadth of view, his powers of exposition, his moral courage have gained for him a position second to none among the Foreign Secretaries of the Grand Alliance") and finally summed up the results of the Crimea meeting. "I must admit that in all this war I never felt so grave a sense of responsibility as I did at Yalta. In 1940 and 1941, when we in this island were all alone and invasion was so near, the actual steps one ought to take and our attitude towards them seemed plain and simple. If a man is coming across the sea to kill you, you do everything in your power to make sure that he dies before finishing his journey. That may be difficult, it may be painful, but at least it is simple.

"Now we are entering a world of imponderables and at every stage occasions for self-questionings arise. It is a mistake to look too far ahead. Only one link in the chain of destiny can be handled at a time.

"I trust that the House will feel that hope has been powerfully strengthened by our meeting in the Crimea. The ties that bind the three Great Powers together and their mutual comprehension of each other have grown. The United States has entered deeply and constructively into the life and salvation of Europe.

"We have all three set our hands to far-reaching engagements,

at once practical and solemn. United we have the unchallengeable power to lead the world to prosperity, freedom and happiness. The Great Powers must seek to serve and not to rule. Joined with other states, large and small, we may found a world organization which, armed with ample power, will guard the rights of all states, great or small, from aggression, or from the gathering of the means of aggression. A fairer choice is open to mankind than they have known in recorded ages. The lights burn brighter and shine more broadly than before. Let us walk forward together."

In the three days' debate, the Polish settlement was the subject to which criticism was addressed. The Tory irreconcilables divided the House on this issue, but only mustered 25 votes against the Government. Mr. Stokes, the director, departed from the Socialist party line to maintain his opposition to the Government.

The motion of approval of the Crimea decisions was carried by 413 votes to nil. There were some 30 abstentions, among them a junior Conservative Minister, H. G. Strauss, who finding it impossible to approve the treatment of the Polish people, resigned his post as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Town and Country Planning.

In the House of Lords debate Viscount Cecil, veteran protagonist of the League of Nations, welcomed the San Francisco Conference and the Crimean declaration as constituting a considerable advance on the original League.

While victory required only the last assault, Winston had the melancholy duty of paying a last tribute of respect to two of the principal figures with whom he had been associated in this war and in the last.

Lloyd George—the earldom was a superfluous title—was as supreme a leader in the first World War as was Winston Churchill in the second and, though his fall from power in 1922 was final, his fame as organizer of victory was not dimmed by the years. The day before the remains of his old friend were laid to rest in the spinney overlooking the river Dwyfor, Winston recalled to the House (March 28th) Lloyd George's many services to the state and his championship of the weak and the poor. "Those," he said, "were great days. Nearly two generations have passed. Most people are unconscious how their lives have been shaped by the laws for which Lloyd George was responsible. Health insurance and Old-Age Pensions were the first large-scale state-conscious efforts to set a balustrade along the crowded causeway of the people's life. I was his lieutenant in those bygone days and shared in a minor way in his work. . . .

"The stamps we lick, the roads along which we travel, the system of progressive taxation, the principal remedies that have yet been used against unemployment—all these are to a very great

exten<sup>t</sup> part not only of the mission but of the actual achievements of Lloyd George." When he came to deal with the role in the last war of this "pugnacious pacifist," Winston spoke of Lloyd George as having "seized" the main power in the state and the leadership of the Government, whereupon several members challenged the "seized." Winston stood by it and recalled Carlyle's saying of Oliver Cromwell, "he coveted the place—perhaps the place was his." Lloyd George was the greatest Welshman which that unconquerable race had produced since the age of the Tudors—as a man of action, resource and creative energy he had stood, when at his zenith, without a rival.

Not many days later death made the first gap in the unity of Allied leadership, and the English-speaking peoples of his own and of British race mourned the passing of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The photographs of the three leaders at Yalta had shown him to be a very sick man, but his sudden collapse, under cerebral hemorrhage, while sitting to a portrait painter came as a profound shock. Few of his colleagues even in the United States felt the sense of loss more keenly than did Winston Churchill. The friendship they had formed while the United States were still at peace, enabled them as Allies to co-operate to a degree few leaders in war have achieved even when both have been of the same race. Nine meetings in person extending over 120 days of close personal contact, 1,700 messages exchanged—contact could not have been more closely maintained.

Paying tribute to this famous President whose friendship for the cause of freedom and for the causes of the weak and poor had won him immortal renown, the Prime Minister said (April 15th), "I conceived an admiration for him as a statesman, as a man of affairs, and as a war leader. I felt the utmost confidence in his upright, inspiring character and outlook and a personal regard—affection I must say—for him beyond my power to express. His love of his own country, his respect for its constitution, his power of gauging the tides and currents of its mobile public opinion—all this was evident. But added to this were the beatings of his generous heart, always stirred to anger and to action by spectacles of aggression by the strong against the weak. It is a loss, a bitter loss to humanity that those heart-beats are still for ever. . . .

"At Yalta I noticed that the President was ailing. His captivating smile, his gay and charming manner had not deserted him, but his face had a transparency, an air of purification, and often there was a faraway look in his eyes. When I took leave of him at Alexandria I must confess that I had an indefinable sense of fear that his health and strength were at the ebb. To the end he faced his innumerable tasks unflinchingly.

"He died in harness like his soldiers, sailors and airmen side

by side with ours all over the world. What an enviable death his was. He had brought his country through the worst of its troubles and through the heaviest of its toils. Victory had cast its sure and steady beam upon him . . . For us it remains only to say that in Franklin Roosevelt there died the greatest American friend we have ever known and the greatest champion of freedom who has ever brought help and comfort from the New World to the Old."

President Roosevelt was pre-eminently fortunate in his passing. He lived to sight the promised land of peace, but died before he could suffer the anxieties, even disillusionments, that peace brought in its train.

Yalta was the high-water mark of Allied goodwill. Seven months later, so fast and so far did the tide of goodwill recede, it was difficult to recapture even in imagination the extreme spirit of cordiality that had enveloped the relations of the three Allies. It then seemed that suspicion and mistrust were to be swept away for ever and that the foundations of a new world order were to be based on the co-operation of Powers inspired by Roosevelt's faith in the five freedoms. Since then a harsher note of realism has obtruded itself.

At Yalta the Allied leaders, seemingly wiser than their predecessors of the previous war, had appeared to solve the problems of peace in advance of victory. A few months later it seemed that the Powers might not attain a settlement at all. It is easier for a confederacy to win a war than to agree to terms of peace. Like a warning from the grave there come the words of Roosevelt's last message to Congress : "The structure of world peace cannot be the work of one man or one party or one nation—it cannot be just an American peace or a British peace or a Russian or a French or a Chinese peace. It cannot be a peace of large nations or of small nations. It must be a peace that depends on the co-operative effort of the whole world."

That Allied harmony, for which Winston laboured, was harshly disturbed in the testing time of peace, may have inspired the regrets of idealists but it should not have caused them surprise. It has been the fate of previous confederacies.

You may remember the passage of the historian : "Many pious persons in subsequent years remembered that time with bitter regret. They described it as a short glimpse of a golden age between two iron ages." It is from Macaulay's epitaph on the Coalition that overthrew James the Second and oppressor. Of the lamentation he described the historian remarked that though it was natural it was not reasonable, for, he observed, "The Coalition of 1688 was produced and could be produced only by tyranny which approached to insanity, by danger which threatened at once all great institutions. . . . Calamity and peril often force men to combine. Prosperity and security often encourage them to separate."

## CHAPTER XIV

*Exit Germany*

YALTA laid the plans for victory. At Potsdam the victors pronounced their measures for the subjugation of the vanquished foe. In the weeks between, victory was swiftly achieved.

This is no place to chronicle the final magnificent phases of the battle of liberation—the repulse of the last enemy attack in the Ardennes, the crumpling up of the Siegfried line, the establishing of the bridgehead at Remagen, the crossing of the Rhine and the charge of our armoured forces across Germany, while the Russians swept relentlessly on from the East. And, for once, the operations on the world battlefield are not chronicled by the reporter-in-chief to Parliament. While the armies went about the task of making known the plans agreed upon at Yalta ("our combined plans will be made known only as we execute them") the Prime Minister was reduced for once to the role of onlooker.

As his duties permitted, he made an occasional visit to the front to see for himself how matters were progressing. Early in March, on the eve of the great assault, he journeyed to the Continent for final consultations with Montgomery and Eisenhower. He crossed for the first time into German territory and there addressed officers and men of the 51st (Highland) Division. "Anyone can see," he told them, "that one good strong heave together will end the war in Europe." As a minor contribution to that heave, he fired into the enemy positions from Goch a giant shell on which he had chalked the message : "Hitler, personally."

By the end of March, Allied forces had swept across the Rhine and Winston was back at the front to make a trip across the river. Landing on the eastern bank, he visited areas that had been in German hands only 36 hours previously. He had made the Rhine crossing in a landing-craft with Eisenhower and Montgomery, and during his tour an enemy shell burst no more than 50 yards from him.

By then it was plain that the end could not long be delayed. The Germans seemed resolved to inflict upon themselves something of the destruction they had wreaked upon others, but so many chunks were being chopped off their army (as Montgomery so vividly phrased it) that it was visibly melting away as an iceberg in the sea. On April 27th came the announcement from 10 Downing Street : "Gen. Eisenhower reports that firm contact has been established between his forces and those of our Soviet Allies."

It was not victory, but the hour was near. The Prime Minister marked the occasion with a brief message. "After long journeys,

toils and victories, across the land and oceans, across so many deadly battlefields, the armies of the great Allies have traversed Germany and have joined hands together. Now their task will be the destruction of all remnants of German military resistance, the rooting out of the Nazi power and the subjugation of Hitler's Reich. For these purposes ample forces are available, and we meet in true and victorious comradeship and with inflexible resolve to fulfil our purpose and our duty. Let all march forward upon the foe."

On the second of May came the announcement of the first unconditional surrender. An army of about a million men in Italy laid down their arms. General von Vietinghoeff, at the head of twenty-five German divisions, with some Fascist forces, had been defeated and his forces completely broken by the lightning offensive of Mark Clark under the supreme direction of Field-Marshal Alexander. The news, which coincided with the end of resistance in Berlin, followed four days after the summary execution of Benito Mussolini, time's laughing-stock among dictators.

It had scarcely been deemed possible that complete victory would have been secured on this the Cinderella of the Allied fronts, where Alexander's forces had suffered successive depletions to augment the armies in Northern Europe—second place but first home. It was in happy accordance with the fitness of things that the overwhelming victory should have come first on the Mediterranean front, the first Allied front in point of time. It was a vindication of British strategy and of Winston's conceptions, for it was he who had had the vision and the confidence in the darkest days to send out our few tanks to Africa to begin the long fight back.

The Prime Minister went to the House to make a statement on Alexander's triumph. The surrender of enemy forces, estimated to number nearly a million, constituted, he said, a record for the whole of the war. He traced the marvellous record of the army that Alexander had under his command—the landing at Salerno, the tremendous fighting at Anzio, the capture of Rome and the driving of the enemy northward. What had added to the difficulties so greatly had been the inroads which had been made into the Allied army to help forward great operations elsewhere—an entire army at the time of the landing in Northern France. More recently, when it was considered that it would probably be beyond the strength of an army so weakened to make a decisive attack, more divisions were transferred from Italy to the Western front, and others to Greece.

Cheer followed cheer as the Prime Minister particularized the many Allied nations which had contributed forces to the army in Italy—"so many that only some personality of commanding qualities could have held them all and woven them all together."

"If you look over the whole list of those men who have fought, you will find, taking as we may our own contribution first—it was the largest—the British and British Indian divisions of the highest quality. In addition to the British divisions we had the Poles (cheers) who have always fought with the greatest loyalty (cheers), the New Zealanders (cheers), who have marched all the way from the beginning right up to the very spearpoint of the advance ; the South African Armoured Division (cheers), who were very forward in the fray ; the great forces of the United States (cheers), second in numbers only to our own. Then there have been the Brazilian forces, which have made their steady advances ; a Negro division of United States troops, which has also distinguished itself ; the Jewish Brigade, which we formed a year or so ago, and which has fought in the front line with courage ; the Japanese of American birth, who entered Turin and finally the Free Italians who have played their part in clearing their country from the German Fascist yoke All these forces, weakened as they have been, were not discouraged. Divided as they were by racial differences, they were united and resolved upon their purpose

"Now their reward has come. (Cheers.) I am very glad that it has come at a time when it can be singled out. (Cheers.) It stands out (Cheers) It brings to a conclusion the work of as gallant an army as ever marched (loud cheers), and brings to a pitch of fame the military reputation of a commander who has always, I may say, enjoyed the fullest confidence of the House of Commons." (Prolonged cheers.)

The first week of May, 1945, marked the final German landslide. Mussolini dead ; Hitler dead (or leastways reported so) ; Goebbels dead ; Hamburg fallen ; Kiel fallen ; Berlin itself fallen ; Denmark freed ; Holland freed ; almost a million German prisoners of war in Northern Italy ; Austria captured, or freed according to how the event be viewed ; Himmler negotiating for surrender ; German soldiers to the number of half a million laying down their arms ; Germans fleeing from the Russians to offer their surrender to the British and Americans. The vast edifice of Nazi tyranny and oppression had crumbled The last battle of the war had been won. The formalities of surrender were begun in Montgomery's tent on Luneburg heath and were concluded at Eisenhower's advanced H.Q. at Rheims and in Berlin.

In the second week of May came V-day and the voice of the Prime Minister announcing victory and peace—the voice that in the same month of May five years before had made his historic summons to the people to labour in blood, tears, and sweat to rid mankind of the most soul-destroying tyranny that had ever stained the pages of history. That task was done.

At three o'clock on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 8th, the

Prime Minister came to the microphone to make the announcement, for which the country was waiting in eager expectation. It was simply phrased :

"Yesterday morning," he said, "at 2.41 a.m. at Gen. Eisenhower's headquarters, Gen. Jodl, the representative of the German High Command, and Grand-Admiral Doenitz, the designated head of the German State, signed the act of unconditional surrender of all German land, sea and air forces in Europe to the Allied Expeditionary Force, and similarly to the Soviet High Command.

"To-day this agreement will be ratified and confirmed at Berlin, when Air Chief-Marshal Tedder, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and Gen de Lattre de Tassigny will sign on behalf of Gen. Eisenhower. Gen Zhukov will sign on behalf of the Soviet High Command. The German representatives will be Field-Marshal Keitel, chief of the High Command, and the commanders-in-chief of the German Army, Navy and Air Forces.

"Hostilities will end officially at one minute after midnight to-night (Tuesday, May 8th), but, in the interests of saving lives, the Cease Fire began yesterday to be sounded all along the front, and our dear Channel Islands are also to be freed to-day.

"To-day we shall perhaps think mostly of ourselves. To-morrow we shall pay a particular tribute to our heroic Russian comrades, whose prowess in the field has been one of the grand contributions to the general victory.

"The German War is therefore at an end. . . .

"Finally, almost the whole world was combined against the evil-doers who are now prostrate before us. Our gratitude to all our splendid Allies goes forth from all our hearts in this island and throughout the British Empire.

"We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead. Japan, with all her treachery and greed, remains unsubdued. We must now devote all our strength and resources to the completion of our tasks, both at home and abroad.

"Advance Britannia! Long live the cause of freedom! God save the King!"

The broadcast made, the Prime Minister proceeded to the House to repeat his announcement. He was held up on the way by the press of cheering crowds in Whitehall. He was given another ovation as he entered the Chamber. As he reached the Treasury Bench, Members on all sides rose to cheer and to wave their order-papers in a demonstration that moved him deeply. The Parliamentary observer noted that a group of four sat silent in a cheering sea, one of them Mr Stokes the director.

Having read the announcement of surrender, the Prime Minister discarded his notes, and with them his glasses, and in a few words expressed his gratitude to the House. His voice became tremulous with emotion as he delivered himself, almost falteringly, of two or three sentences.

The House, he said, had proved itself the strongest foundation for waging war that had ever been seen in the whole of our long history. The strength of parliamentary institutions had been shown by its ability at once to preserve the title deeds of democracy and to wage war in the most stern and protracted form.

"I wish to give my hearty thanks to men of all parties for the way in which the liveliness of Parliamentary institutions has been maintained under the fire of the enemy and for the way in which we have been able to persevere—and could have persevered much longer if need have been—till all the objectives we set before us, the unlimited and unconditional surrender of the enemy had been achieved."

Thereafter, the Prime Minister moved a brief resolution, in terms identical with that of a quarter of a century before, "That this House do now attend at the Church of St. Margaret, Westminster, to give humble and reverent thanks to Almighty God for our deliverance from the threat of German domination." With Arthur Greenwood at his side, the Prime Minister then followed Mr. Speaker to the Church that stands in the shadow of the Abbey Church of Westminster.

Twice during the evening of V.E. Day Winston appeared before the rejoicing crowds that thronged Whitehall to be cheered to the echo. From the beflagged balcony of the Ministry of Health, with members of the Government about him, he briefly addressed the multitude beneath him. "God bless you all," he said, "this is your victory. It is the victory of the cause of freedom in every land. In all our long history we have never seen a greater day than this." With Ernest Bevin beating time, the crowd sang, "For he's a jolly good fellow," and raised three sustained and tremendous cheers for victory.

Later, after dark, when the floodlighting had been turned on, Winston again appeared on the balcony to conduct the crowds as they sang "Land of Hope and Glory" "We in this ancient land," he said, "were the first to draw the sword against the Germans. After a while, we were left all alone for a year. Were we downhearted? (The crowd gave him his answer in a mighty roar.) When shall the reputation and faith of this generation of Englishmen and Englishwomen fail? I say that in the long years to come not only the people of this island, but from all over the world, wherever the bird of freedom chirps in human hearts, they will look back to what we have done and will say: 'Never despair!' Don't

yield to violence and tyranny ! March straight forward and die, if need be, unconquered."

The night was given up to rejoicing, but there can have been few minds, even at such a moment of supreme jubilation, which were not made solemn for a space by the thought of the narrow margin of our deliverance. And coupled with this reflection went a thankfulness to those who had made deliverance possible.

With characteristic sureness of touch as interpreter of the sentiments of the hour, Winston gave expression to the people's gratitude when he broadcast on the evening of May 13. The day of victory had preceded by forty-eight hours the fifth anniversary of his succession as Prime Minister, and in his broadcast on peace in Europe, he gave an account of his stewardship.

First he paid tribute to the airmen who won the Battle of Britain —forty or fifty squadrons of fighter aircraft who broke the teeth of the German air fleet at odds of seven or eight to one. Conjoined with the Royal Air Force was the Royal Navy, ready to tear to pieces the barges gathered for the invasion. Then there were the people at home who had borne the blitz, bearing the suffering without complaint and proving that London could "take it" as could other cities as well.

We should never forget the devotion of our merchant seamen, nor the vast, inventive, adaptive, all-embracing and in the end all-controlling power of the Royal Navy. There were the men and women in the factories who had sometimes worked at their machines till they dropped senseless with fatigue.

Winston gave credit to the mistakes of the enemy—the ghastly mistake of Hitler in hurling himself on Russia, the felon blow at Pearl Harbour which brought the United States into war.

In the reckoning of gratitude there was a place for our scientists —"not surpassed by any nation, especially when their thought is applied to naval matters." It was right to extol the glorious services of our most famous commanders, Alexander and Montgomery, neither of whom had known defeat since they had begun together at Alamein. Great was the debt to the unifying direction of Eisenhower. To this the Prime Minister added a personal tribute to the British Chiefs of Staff—Brooke, Pound, Cunningham and Portal, with whom he had worked in the closest intimacy and who deserved the highest honour in the direction of war strategy.

There was one point of regret—the attitude of Eire. In the dark days, when the U-boat menace was most dire, the sense of envelopment, which might at any moment have turned to strangulation, lay heavy upon us "We had only the north-western approach from Ulster to Scotland through which to bring in the means of life, and to send out the forces of war. Owing to the action of Mr de Valera, so much at variance with the temper and instinct of

thousands of Southern Irishmen who hastened to the battle-front to prove their ancient valour, the approaches which the Southern Irish ports and airfields could so easily have guarded were closed by hostile aircraft and U-boats.

"This was indeed a deadly moment in our life, and if it had not been for the loyalty and friendship of Northern Ireland, we should have been forced to come to close quarters with Mr de Valera or perish for ever from the earth. However, with a restraint and poise to which, I say, history will find few parallels, His Majesty's Government never laid a violent hand upon them, though at times it would have been quite easy and quite natural, and we left the de Valera Government to frolic with the Germans and later with the Japanese representatives to their hearts' content.

"When I think of these days, I think also of other episodes and personalities. I think of Lt Cmdr. Esmonde, V.C., of Lance-Cpl. Keneally, V.C., Capt Fegen, V.C., and other Irish heroes I could easily recite, and then I must confess that all bitterness by Britain against the Irish race dies in my heart. I can only pray that in years which I shall not see, the shame will be forgotten and the glories will endure, and that the peoples of the British Isles as of the British Commonwealth of Nations will walk together in mutual comprehension and forgiveness."

There were reasons beyond public knowledge for thankfulness at our timely deliverance. "There was," the Prime Minister said, "one final danger from which the collapse of Germany saved us. In London and the South Eastern Counties we have suffered for a year from the various forms of flying bombs—perhaps you have heard about them—and rockets.<sup>1</sup> Our Air Force and our ack-ack batteries have done wonders against them.

"But it was only when our armies cleaned up the coast and overran all the points of discharge, and when the Americans captured vast stores of rockets of all kinds near Leipzig, which added to our information only the other day, and when all the preparations being made on the coasts of France and Holland could be examined in detail, and scientific detail, that we knew how grave had been the peril, not only from rockets and flying-bombs, but from multiple long-range artillery, which was being prepared against London.

"Only just in time did the Allied armies blast the viper in his

<sup>1</sup> From the time the first V2 fell at Chiswick, September 8, 1944, to the last at Orpington, March 27, 1945, 1,050 rockets reached this country, killing 2,754 persons and seriously injuring 6,523. In 80 days of the main V1 attack, 8,000 flying bombs were launched by the enemy, of which 2,300 got through to the London region. At least 3,500 were brought down in the Kent-Sussex area. No fewer than 23,000 houses were destroyed or damaged beyond repair and 870,000 houses in the London area alone were still awaiting repair when the attacks were ended. Total civilian casualties in Britain due to enemy action were 146,760, of which 60,585 were deaths.

nest. Otherwise the autumn of 1944, to say nothing of 1945, might well have seen London as shattered as Berlin."

Now that the Germans were vanquished, it was the duty of the victors to ensure that the fruits of victory were not lost. "On the Continent of Europe," Winston said, "we have yet to make sure that the simple and honourable purposes for which we entered the war are not brushed aside or overlooked in the months following our success, and that the words freedom, democracy and liberation are not distorted from their true meaning as we have understood them. There would be little use in punishing the Hitlerites for their crimes if law and justice did not rule, and if totalitarian or police Governments were to take the place of the German invaders.

"We seek nothing for ourselves. But we must make sure that those causes which we fought for find recognition at the peace table in facts as well as words, and above all, we must labour that the world organization which the United Nations are creating at San Francisco does not become an idle name, does not become a shield for the strong and a mockery for the weak. It is the victors who must search their hearts in their glowing hours and be worthy by their nobility of the immense forces that they wield."

\* \* \*

It had been my intention to conclude this narrative with the jubilations of VE day and to add a few reflections on the career of the great war minister. Delay in completing the work brought a new climax to the career and outdated the proposed reflections.

The tempo of events in victory year was attuned to the requirements of a Hollywood film producer rather than to the measured scale of history. Each age is agreeably persuaded that it has exceeded its predecessors in superlative qualities but, making allowance for this pardonable vanity, we may assert that within the narrow compass of twelve months there were crowded a greater show of events of prime importance to mankind than can be assigned to any other comparable period of time.

The rejoicings for victory in Europe had hardly died down before the political parties, to the tune of mutual recrimination, broke up the Coalition Government. Winston and his Caretakers carried on, while wartime ministerial associates strove to destroy one another politically. On July 17th, the Prime Minister, President Truman and Premier Stalin opened the winding-up of the war conference at Potsdam. On July 25th, Winston flew back to London, with Mr. Secretary Eden to hear the results of the polls. On July 28th, Clement Attlee, now Prime Minister, flew back to Berlin with Mr. Secretary Bevin to conclude the decisions of Potsdam.

Winston's fall from power had been contrived by director of the world's stage with all the circumstances that could heighten

'the drama of the event. It was in keeping with his career. He had taken office at the time of what he termed first climacteric of the war. He was dismissed from his post by the verdict of the people on the morrow of the most complete and resounding victory in which British arms had been engaged.

The circumstances of his fall and the reasons for it will for long engage the attention of historians. I take the opportunity in a concluding chapter to offer to them the testimony of a contemporary and detached observer



*EPILOGUE*

*Now every man writing thus his name in a shell whom they would have banished : it is reported there was a plain man of the country (very simple) that could neither read nor write, who came to Aristides (being the first man he met with) and gave him his shell, praying him to write Aristides' name upon it. He being abashed withal, did ask the country man if Aristides had ever done him any displeasure. No, said the country man, he never did me hurt, but it grieves me to hear every man call him a just man. Aristides hearing him say so, gave him no answer but wrote his name upon the shell and delivered it to the country man. But as he went his way out of the city he lifted up his hands to heaven and made a prayer, contrary to that of Achilles in Homer, beseeching the Gods that the Athenians might never have such troubles in hand as they should be compelled to call for Aristides again.*

PLUTARCH, LIFE OF ARISTIDES IN  
NORTH'S TRANSLATION.

## *The Fall*

WARFARE in Europe and victory rejoicings had scarcely been concluded before national unity at home was summarily terminated and the country was given up to the political warfare of the first general election for ten years.

It was to Winston's regret that the Coalition Government was brought to an end and his opinion was shared by wiser minds on both sides of the political fence. But on both sides, too, there were eager spirits, fiery champions of their parties, who were spoiling for the fray.

Among Conservatives there was impatience to be done with the restraints of the party truce. They had held party activities in abeyance; they had suffered, they complained, many insults and slanders to pass. The party truce, they represented, had worked to their detriment and to the advantage of their opponents.

On the other side, Labour politicians complained that the shelving of political controversy had worked in favour of Conservatism—six years of things as they were. The Socialists were the more eager to take the country's verdict as all the political pointers suggested that the tide of opinion was running strongly in their favour.

The opening moves of the campaign were marked by the customary jockeying for position. Who was to bear the responsibility for breaking up the Coalition? A considerable body of electors would be likely to take the view that the Coalition Government should continue in office until the conclusion of the war with Japan. They might be expected to visit their displeasure on the party that made the break. So the process of dismemberment was approached with some delicacy.

The Prime Minister discussed the matter with his principal Labour colleagues. They offered to remain at their posts for a few months so that the appeal to the country might be delayed until the autumn. To this limited extension of the Government's existence Winston was not prepared to agree. For the past several months, he represented, Ministerial and Parliamentary affairs had been increasingly affected by the approach of the election, and this had not conduced to the national interest. He suggested that a specific object should be fixed upon as determining the period of the prolongation of their joint endeavours—the end of the war with

Japan. Writing to Clement Attlee and to the leaders of the two wings of Liberalism, he observed (letters of May 18): "The First Lord of the Admiralty (A. V. Alexander) has already expressed his regret that a General Election should be held before the Japanese war is finished. It would give me great relief if you and your friends were found resolved to carry on with us until a decisive victory has been gained over Japan. In the meanwhile we would work together to do our utmost to implement proposals for social security and full employment contained in the White Papers we have laid before Parliament." Being conscious of the need to strengthen the Ministry by taking an expression of the nation's will, Winston proposed that a referendum should be held to ascertain if it were the people's wish that the life of Parliament should be thus prolonged.

The determining voice on these proposals belonged to the Labour Party which was meeting at Blackpool for its annual conference. The letter was considered in private session. There were two supporters for the course recommended by the Prime Minister; all the other members were against it. Attlee conveyed the decision in a letter to the Prime Minister in which he protested against a rushed election forthwith ("like that of 1918") and found a variety of reasons for delay until the autumn (a more complete and effective register, the opportunity for service electors of "more fully acquainting themselves with the issues"). As to the referendum he would have none of it—"I could not consent to the introduction into our national life of a device so alien to our traditions, which has only too often been the instrument of Nazism and Fascism. Hitler's practices in the field of referenda and plebiscites can hardly have endeared these practices to the British heart." He pronounced, further, that the grounds for rejecting an autumn election seemed to be based not on national interests, but on considerations of party expediency. "It appears to me," he added, "that you are departing from the position of a national leader by yielding to the pressure of the Conservative Party which is anxious to exploit your own great services to the nation in its own interests." So Clement Attlee urged the Prime Minister to reconsider his decision to hold an election "under circumstances which are bound to cause bitter resentment among men of the fighting services." Should Winston insist on a July poll "despite all the disadvantages," then the responsibility would be his and his alone.

Honours in the preliminary exchanges seem to have been easy. For what it was worth, the Tories were able to complain that their rivals had broken up the Coalition. The Socialists had secured a case to support the time-honoured complaint that the election was badly timed—there never was an election yet which was not badly timed according to the reckoning of the party that did not fix it.

At a later date regrets were voiced that the man who had seen the country through to victory was deprived of the chance of putting his signature to the victory declarations from Potsdam. Had the Socialist proposal been accepted Winston would have been in office both for the conclusion of the Potsdam conference and the end of the war with Japan. He chose otherwise.

At noon on May 23rd, Winston tendered his resignation to the King. The famous Coalition was dissolved after an existence of thirteen days beyond five years. Four hours later, Winston kissed hands upon re-appointment as Prime Minister and the Caretaker Government was formed. This stop-gap administration was made up for the most part of Conservatives, though it was designated National and though Winston had not confined his choice to members of his Party but had drawn upon "men of goodwill of any party or no party, willing to serve." There were forty members either in the Cabinet of sixteen (the War Cabinet was superseded) or "of Cabinet rank." Of these twenty-six were Conservatives, eight non-party, four Liberal National, one Liberal (Gwilym Lloyd George) and one not an M.P.—Sir Walter Monckton, the new Solicitor General. Among the upper sixteen were R. A. Butler, who left the Board of Education to fill Ernest Bevin's place as Labour Minister and Brendan Bracken, promoted from Minister of Information to the Admiralty. The honoured name of Rosebery was once more to be found in the Cabinet list, the son of the Liberal Prime Minister taking office as Secretary for Scotland.

Among the others "of Cabinet Rank" interest was focused on the choice for the new post of Minister of National Insurance of Leslie Hore Belisha, once numbered among the critics, who appeared to have made his peace with Winston. Men of promise among the younger Conservatives were given junior posts, and two women M.P.s—Miss Florence Horsbrugh (Parliamentary Secretary Ministry of Food) and Mrs Cazalet Keir (Parliamentary Under-Secretary Board of Education) whose motion on equal pay for women had caused the famous Coalition to sustain its solitary defeat in the division lobbies. For three weeks Ministers faced the Socialist opposition in the House while the essential business was disposed of. Then the cry of "Who goes home" was raised for the last time in the first Parliament of His Majesty King George VI. Members, or such of them as were standing, hurried away to their constituencies leaving to the free and independent electors the decision. Who goes back.

There is no need, nor would this be the place, to recapitulate the events of the Election in any detail. In the books, democracy at the polls appears to be a majestic feature of the nation's constitutional existence. In the reality of the meetings it falls short of the constitutional ideal when misrepresentation does duty for arguments

and sustained noise drowns the voice of reason. The election of 1945 went the way of its predecessors without being conspicuously better or worse. There was a spate of oratory or what passes for such at the meetings from 1,683 candidates nominated on June 25, in 617 constituencies for 640 seats. In the main the election was fought on the simple issue of free enterprise versus state socialism.

Tories sought to make the electors' flesh creep over the hidden menaces of Socialism, and the Labour speakers to charm the voters with siren songs of national planning and nationalization. It is passing strange that in the year of grace 1945 any vast degree of menace or merit could be imparted to the nationalization of mines and the Bank of England, but to this theme thousands of speeches were devoted.

Winston ran full tilt against Socialism. His first broadcast, the opening speech of the radio campaign, was devoted to a denunciation of that creed. It was a policy, he proclaimed, whose development was incompatible with our democratic system. It was abhorrent to British ideas of freedom. It was inseparable from totalitarianism and the abject worship of the state. It struck at all forms of liberty and would involve us in some form of Gestapo.

The less partisan of Winston's supporters were distressed at the tone and terms of the speech. There was such a stark contrast between the words of the man who had been head of the National Coalition and those of the party leader. It gave Clement Attlee, on the night following, the opening he was waiting for.

Of the outcome of a straight fight between Toryism and Socialism, the Labour leaders had no fears, but of the result of a contest against the Tories plus the leader who had conducted the nation to victory and who was held in universal esteem, they had no such confidence. To what extent the electorate would be affected by the prestige of the Prime Minister—that was the unknown factor of the campaign. With astuteness and persistence Labour speakers sought to destroy the magic of the name of Winston by concealing the figure of the great leader of the nation united in war in the cloak and trappings of the Conservative party boss.

Winston's speeches suggested that in political affairs his judgment was less sound, his strategy not so well conceived as in matters military. It should have been his aim to have preserved at all costs the figure of the national leader and to have left the purely party appeals to his lieutenants. The vote of the staunch party followers could be relied upon without the need to labour on the anti-Socialist drum. It was among the middle men and women of politics that votes were to be won and lost. The speeches of Winston the partisan were calculated to antagonize rather than attract such electors.

It looked at the outset that the campaign was to be pretty heavy

going, until some light relief was found in Professor Laski. In retrospect we can sympathize with this electoral victim. It is a hard fate that drags a man out of the comfortable obscurity of a university chair to be elevated into a national bogey. But the electors must have their figure of fun and since no one else offered, Harold Laski had to serve.

Though Chairman of the Labour Party National Executive Laski, with professorial coyness, had resisted attempts to involve him as candidate, in the hurly-burly of the election, preferring to scent the noise of battle from afar. But he obtruded himself in matters that had arisen between the Prime Minister and Clement Attlee.

The Potsdam conference was due to open on July 17th, and in view of the uncertainties of the political future, Winston proposed that Attlee should accompany him to Potsdam as member of the British delegation. Thereupon Professor Harold attempted to enter a caveat. Since the Three-Power Conference would be deciding matters which had not been debated by his executive or by his Party, then the Party could not be committed by the Potsdam decisions. Should Mr. Attlee attend at Potsdam, it was essential that it should be in the sole role of observer.

So far as the Potsdam proceedings were concerned the matter was soon disposed of. Winston, in his formal invitation, said his idea was that Attlee should come along as friend and counsellor to "help us on all subjects on which we have been so long agreed." For him to go as mute observer would be derogatory to his position as leader of his party. Attlee replied that he accepted the invitation in agreement with his principal colleagues in the House. "There was never any suggestion," he remarked, "that I should go as mere observer." Attlee ignored the Professor and continued to ignore the Professor.

Press and politicians leaped at the Professor. Privately they were grateful to him for his intervention; it gave them something new for their polemics. In public they denounced him and with him his executive for attempting to dictate policy to the party, were Labour successful at the polls, he would be dictating policy next, to the Government and the people.

Poor Professor! Nature had scarcely cast him for the role of dictator. Anyone who has seen Harold Laski in the flesh would not judge him capable of dictating to any body of persons outside his own classroom. He was an election godsend, above all to the *Daily Express* newspaper whose columns became consecrated to Laski and his Committee of 27 dictators. After some days of it, one began to wonder whether the Conservative election campaign was being conducted by Winston from 10, Downing Street or by Beaverbrook's boys in the back room in Shoe Lane. It was mon-

strously diverting and, if it didn't win votes, it was good for circulations.

Winston himself sought to make capital out of the Laski episode. He pointed out that the Labour Party leader had not disowned the Professor and that the Laski instruction to go to Potsdam solely as observer had not been withdrawn. This, submitted Winston, showed that Laski was the leader of forces too strong for Attlee to challenge. From this he argued that the Socialist executive would have far-reaching powers over Socialist Ministers and that furthermore secrets of state would be divulged by Socialist Ministers to the Committee of 27, an unconstitutional and undemocratic body.

To this Clement Attlee retorted with some heat. The insinuation that Labour Ministers had so little respect for their oaths as Privy Councillors that they would reveal Cabinet and military secrets to outsiders was one that Winston knew from his experience to be "vile and false." He had expected the Prime Minister ("who had old-fashioned ideas about what was permissible in elections") to allow himself a deal of latitude in his attacks, but he had never thought that he would have descended to "such depths of misrepresentation and ingratitude towards men who had shown him such loyalty and consideration."

There were several more exchanges by speech and letter between the two leaders. Indeed, Winston was pressing for a repudiation of the Professor up to polling-day. Clement Attlee's final rejoinder was that Winston was under-estimating the intelligence of the electors.

Here again, one feels that the Prime Minister's tactics were at fault and that he would have been well advised to have left to the boys in the back room the job of pricking the bubble of professorial pretentiousness.

The Prime Minister passed a succession of strenuous electoral days. There was the party to lead, the speeches to prepare—he delivered four out of the ten broadcasts allocated to the Conservatives—the tasks of Prime Minister and Defence Minister to be discharged, and those of the Foreign Office in addition. Anthony Eden, a sick man, had been ordered to rest and Winston deputized for him. In his new constituency of Woodford, Winston had as his opponent a Northampton farmer, formerly a shoe manufacturer, Mr. A. Hancock, who was standing as Independent.

The last days of the campaign were devoted by the Prime Minister to a whirlwind tour from Aylesbury through the Midlands to Manchester, from Lancashire to Yorkshire and northwards to Glasgow and Edinburgh. He travelled more than a thousand miles and made more than forty speeches. A train was his headquarters and a special car served as his office for the discharge of his divers duties. The tour, the most spectacular electoral undertaking since the days of Midlothian, was marked by scenes of a

royal progress Everywhere the war minister was received by prodigious, mammoth crowds and for the most part the welcome given him was of exuberant enthusiasm. It was a reception given to the leader of the nation rather than to the head of the Conservative party. To Winston's personal popularity with the people the demonstrations were unequivocal testimony. As political pointers they were illusory. Back in London, Winston made evening tours of the constituencies where the crowds were repeated, though the cordiality of the reception was disturbed by dissentients. The final mass meeting at Walthamstow Stadium, where a crowd of 20,000 had gathered, two nights before the poll, was the climax of the tour.

One warning Winston gave at all his meetings—that he could not continue in office unless returned by a substantial majority. It was a necessary correction. The suggestion had got abroad, that whatever the result of the polls might be he would still be at the head of affairs.

Polling took place on July 5, and the ballot boxes were then put in storage for three weeks.<sup>1</sup>

The election concluded, Winston journeyed to south-west France to take a respite from the cares of state and politics at St. Jean de Luz, not far from Hendaye. From there he went on to Potsdam for the end of the war conference with Premier Stalin and President Truman. The main work had been completed when, with Mr Secretary Eden, he left for home. The expectation was that after the declaration of the polls he would return to Potsdam for the winding up of the conference. Fate and the electors willed otherwise.

For the second time in his political career, Winston's future was determined by an electoral landslide. In 1906, with the defeat of the Conservatives, the Liberals were swept into power and with them Winston to receive his first ministerial post. Now, in 1945, Labour was swept into power and Winston and the Conservatives out of office. The verdict of the electors was emphatic.

In the old House, Winston, as leader of the Conservatives, had a following of 357 members, outnumbering the Socialists by two to one. The general election reversed the position. Winston's party was reduced to 197, outnumbered by two to one by the 393 Labour members.

<sup>1</sup> The interval was to provide time for the voters in the services to cast their votes. It was not found possible to provide for personnel serving in Australia and New Zealand, but otherwise planes of R.A.F. Transport Command took out ballots and election addresses to the far-flung commands and brought back the voting papers from Europe and the Near East, from Africa and America, from the Atlantic outposts, the Azores and Iceland, from India and even from the front in Burma. Of two and half million service voters, over 1,800,000 had appointed proxies before the postal ballot had been arranged. Many thousands of proxy voters had to be weeded out from the boxes, the postal vote given in person superseding the proxy.

On the evening of declaration day (July 26), Winston drove to Buckingham Palace, the familiar cigar between his lips, the famous V-sign his greeting to the onlookers. A few minutes later he had tendered his resignation to the King. The Government of Care-takers had passed from the scene after the briefest existence of any modern administration. Clement Attlee took office and the plane to Potsdam. Of the three Allied leaders who met at Yalta, Stalin alone remained.

Winston's first duty on laying down the burden that had been placed upon him in darker times was to express to the people of Britain the gratitude he felt for the unflinching, unwavering support they had given him during the perilous years. He permitted himself to say that he regretted that he had not been allowed to finish the work against Japan. It was not without a pang, as he confessed later, that he found himself dismissed from the honourable task of guiding affairs at a time which would decide Britain's place in the post-war world.

The fall of Winston Churchill caused world-wide surprise—surprise and no little dismay. The leader of the first resistance movement to Nazism was looked upon not so much as British minister, but as war leader of the Allied world. Nowhere outside this country had his dismissal from office been looked upon as an electoral possibility. Even at home, where there was nicer appreciation of the force of public opinion, it had not been generally supposed that the political pendulum would swing so far to the Left. Regret at the fall of the great war minister was not confined to his own party. Many who had voted against the Conservatives shared the pang that Winston felt.

There were criticisms of his leadership—the leader always is attacked when a party loses at the polls. *The Times*, while paying tribute to his wartime pre-eminence—"the temporal embodiment to his age of eternal England"—found occasion to regret that he had emphasized the narrower animosities of the party fight, with the result that the great national programme was allowed to slip into the background and his own stature to be temporarily diminished. It is true enough that the contrast between the national leader and the party chief was emphasized rather than disguised by the tactics Winston pursued. In times of war, his speeches had expressed the resolves of every man and woman; in the election his attacks on Socialism had antagonized half the electorate and had chilled the admiration of many progressive minds. But the causes of his electoral defeat lay deeper than that. Other tactics might have reduced the adverse majority—they could not have reversed it.

Some millions of voters had changed their allegiance. The Conservative poll in 1935 stood at 10,500,000; in 1945 it dropped

to 8,500,000. The Socialists received 8,300,000 votes ten years before ; in 1945 the total was 11,990,000—an increase of 3,500,000. What was the cause of this swing over ? It is scarcely to be explained by the superior merits of the programme the Socialists placed before the country Tories and Socialists had made much the same offerings for the electorate—fight to a finish against Japan, reaping the fruits of victory abroad, and at home extension of the social services based upon the Coalition blue prints This was common to the two parties and beyond this Labour offered Socialism You would scarcely imagine that nationalization of the mines and the Bank of England could have fired the enthusiasm of a people jubilant over victory. The causes of the electoral landslide must be looked for elsewhere They are to be found in the resentment that was felt over events in pre-war years, and in the electors' fears and hopes for the future

All the omissions of the years before the war were laid upon the party which had been preponderant in the House and in the Ministry. The nation had not been prepared for war—blame the Tories ; the Empire had been neglected—blame the Tories. Labour might have been equally culpable, Labour might have been pacifist, Labour might have clamoured for collective security while opposing the means to make security secure But Labour was not in office. The party in power must take the blame when things go wrong, and in this case things had gone wrong at the very points where the electors had reason to suppose the Conservatives would have ensured they would have been one hundred per cent right

By tradition and their own claims the Tories have been the party of Empire and a strong Britain. The Empire and Britain's defences had been neglected in the pre-war years Conservative explanations were not accepted. There had been a revulsion of feeling over appeasement and Munich Britain's weakness had nearly brought about her defeat and for this unpreparedness scapegoats must be found You could hear on all hands the opinion that the Conservative party had been false to its trust and to its faith—false because it had sold its soul. It was a reproach against the party that it stood for big business, for wealth and privilege and big business and privilege were never so little esteemed.

As the social consequences of the war come to be examined, it will be seen that a transformation was brought about during the five years of Winston Churchill's premiership comparable in some of its effects with the results of the Russian revolution A vast step forward in the process of equalization had been taken, almost unnoticed in the stress of the days of peril.

When the watchwords of the French Revolution were adopted here, emphasis came to be placed not so much on liberty—which we reckoned to be ours already—or on fraternity, but on equality

and abolition of privilege. The abolition of political privilege and the attainment of electoral equality with the grant of adult franchise to men and women took four years short of a century to achieve from the passing of the Reform Bill of 1932. During that century not so much progress had been made towards social and financial equalization.

When the electors took stock of the position in the summer of 1945, they came to a realization of the transformation wartime measures had brought about. Taxation had drastically reduced the incomes of the wealthy. The Prime Minister's salary of £10,000, for instance, was reduced by taxation to an actual income of £3,168. Even a millionaire could scarcely draw £5,000 a year from income. At the other end of the scale there had been such an improvement that poverty, destitution and starvation had been abolished. Everywhere the war had imposed equality—equality in food and clothing, equality in service to the country, equality in sacrifice.

Conscious of the results of this social revolution, electors in great numbers were concerned to give their votes so that there should be no reversing of the process of equalization, no slipping back to privilege for the extremely wealthy and to destitution for the extremely poor. Clamour for the removal of wartime controls made in the name of the little man was received with suspicion. If controls were necessary to preserve the people from the old inequalities, then controls, it was felt, had better stay.

Amongst the political observers of the Right, none is more shrewd than Arthur Mann, who for twenty years occupied the editorial chair of the *Yorkshire Post*. His analysis<sup>1</sup> of the causes of the defeat of the Conservative Party is worthy of study. "Those," he wrote, "who directed the Conservative election campaign considered it more important to try to discredit their rivals by wild and irresponsible suggestions than to present to the voters an attractive programme of practical reconstruction and reform. The election result has proved conclusively that the 'red bogey' no longer holds any terrors for the British people, who have seen the hostile critics of the Soviet régime confounded by the magnificent spirit of Russian resistance."

"Equally misguided was the belief that the immense prestige and popularity of Mr Churchill was an adequate substitute for a policy. The 'Vote National' poster, with its implication that those who did not support the Prime Minister were unpatriotic, caused widespread resentment and undoubtedly influenced many people to vote against the Government."

"Present political trends all over the world suggest that we are indeed entering upon what Henry Wallace has called the century of the common man. In every European country that has been

<sup>1</sup> Letter to *The Times*, July 31, 1945.

engaged in the recent conflict the sufferings of the last six years have caused a violent revulsion of feeling against the men who were in power before the war, and a growing consciousness of the need for ordinary men and women to play a more important part in the conduct of affairs, if a repetition of the tragedy is to be avoided.

"If the Conservative Party is to survive as a vigorous national force it must adapt itself to the spirit of the times and discard the negative outlook, which has dominated its thinking for the past decade, above all it must succeed in convincing the country that it has a real contribution to make to Britain's welfare and that it stands for something fresh and vital in the life of the nation—not for property or privilege or the interests of a particular class, but for liberty and good fellowship and the conquest of new fields of human endeavour "

In the interval between the declaration of the polls and the meeting of the new Parliament, there was much speculation both at home and abroad as to how the Conservative Party and their leader would comport themselves. Conservatives during the campaign had declared their emphatic and uncompromising hostility to the policy of Socialism. Were they in the House to press their opposition to the utmost limits, national feelings would soon be aflame. In the House of Lords the Conservative peers would be in a position to veto Socialist legislation. In the days of Winston's youth, the Tory Peers, in this partisan fashion, had manhandled Liberal legislation so that it became a reproach that the Upper House was not the watchdog of the constitution but only Mr Balfour's poodle. Were these tactics to be repeated and Socialist legislation emasculated, then an acute constitutional crisis would arise such as had not occurred since 1912

When Parliament met the Conservative leaders in the Lords and Commons took the earliest opportunity of letting it be known that there would be no factious opposition to the Government's measures. These had been put before the electorate and the Labour Government could claim the possession of a mandate for carrying them out Said Winston, "We do not propose to join issue immediately about the legislative proposals The national ownership of the Bank of England does not in my opinion raise any matter of principle. It may be helpful for me to express the opinion as leader of the Opposition that foreign countries need not be alarmed—British credit will be resolutely upheld." As to the nationalization of the coal mines—"if that is really the best way of securing a larger supply of coal at a cheaper price and at an earlier moment than is now in view, I, for one, shall approach the plan in a sympathetic spirit. It is by results that the policy must be judged."

So the verdict of the election was accepted and the Mother of Parliaments gave one more illustration to the world that democracy

in this country is no mere ideal to which men pay lip-service in public, but the essential reality of our political life.

Since the election and the Potsdam conference, events had again moved with furious speed. Russia had joined with the Allies in the war in the Far East; atomic bombs had been employed against the Japanese; and Japan had followed Germany in unconditional surrender.

Though these events took place after his fall, they belong to Winston's Premiership. Some time previously he had reached an understanding with Premier Stalin, that Russia would declare war on Japan three months after the defeat of Germany, an undertaking that was scrupulously observed. One of the last major decisions Winston made as Prime Minister was taken in conjunction with President Truman during the Potsdam Conference. It was for the employment of the new agent of destruction against the Japanese.

The British Government's announcement about the development of the atomic bomb underlined Winston's part in promoting the research work. It was nearly a fortnight after his resignation that the Japanese arms centre of Hiroshima was made the target for the first atomic bomb attack. Despite the change in Government, the statement from 10, Downing Street was made in the terms Winston had drawn up before he left office. It was a detailed account of the contribution British research had made to exploiting the basic energy of the universe. By the summer of 1941, Sir George Thomson's Committee was able to report that there was a reasonable chance that success would be achieved before the war was over. A few months later, Lord Cherwell (Winston's adviser in these matters) reported that such substantial progress had been made that the Prime Minister decided to refer the matter to the Chiefs of Staff Committee in the following minute.

*"Gen. Ismay for Chiefs of Staff Committee*

"Although personally I am quite content with the existing explosives, I feel we must not stand in the path of improvement, and I therefore think that action should be taken in the sense proposed by Lord Cherwell, and that the Cabinet Minister responsible should be Sir John Anderson. I shall be glad to know what the Chiefs of Staff Committee think."

The Chiefs of the Staff recommended immediate action, with the maximum priority.

The next step in atomic research was the pooling of knowledge by Britain and the United States, the result of a letter from President Roosevelt in October 1941, a few weeks before the outrage of Pearl Harbour had put an end to American non-belligerency. So the

British team of scientists migrated to America and there, beyond the range of the German predatory bomber, vast plants were established, employing at their peak 125,000 persons and involving an outlay of £500,000,000.

"By God's mercy," added Winston, "British and American science outpaced all German efforts. These were on a considerable scale but far behind." What the enemy was doing was a source of profound anxiety and our intelligence service concentrated on investigating this priority secret. Acting on the information we received, British Commando troops and Norwegian volunteers made two separate attacks on the stores of heavy water the Germans had accumulated in Norway.

"This revelation of the secrets of nature, long mercifully withheld from man," concluded Winston's statement, "should arouse the most solemn reflections in the mind and conscience of every human being. We must indeed pray that these awful agencies will be made to conduce to peace among the nations, and that instead of wreaking measureless havoc upon the entire globe they may become a perennial fountain of world prosperity."

Thanks to what President Truman termed the "greatest gamble in history," the Allies had won the battle of the laboratories. In the light of these announcements and of the accounts of the havoc wrought at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the people of Britain came to a realization of all that was involved in the race between the Allied research workers and the Allied armies with the German physicists. Had the Wehrmacht been able to maintain resistance long enough for German scientists to complete their work, Europe would have been the battlefield for the first war of the atom. Men and women who might have survived the blotting out of their cities and the wreck of their civilization, would have cursed the inventive faculties of the race that had imposed this new misery upon mankind. Looking at the world on which peace has descended, with its six years' record of man's mounting inhumanity to man, none can have confidence that this atomic power may not prove a greater curse to mankind than any of their inventions. Man's skill has outrun his wisdom. Unless he can change his character, he seems likely to perish by the weapon he has made.

Three months to the day after he had moved the address of congratulation to the King on the end of the war in Europe, Winston, as leader of the Opposition, seconded a similar address on the occasion of victory against the Japanese. "Our cause," he said, "has been carried to complete success. Total war has ended in absolute victory. Once again the British Commonwealth and Empire emerges safe, undiminished and united from a mortal struggle. Monstrous tyrannies which menaced our life have been beaten to the ground in ruin."

The following day (August 16) the old Prime Minister and the new delivered their winding-up the war speeches to the House. Winston rose to make his first speech to the new House of Commons. He described how he and President Truman were engaged at Potsdam in giving their final approval to plans for landings in Malaya, in the Netherlands East Indies and in the homeland of Japan, when the eagerly awaited news arrived on July 17th, of the trial of the atomic bomb in the Mexican desert. A new factor had been introduced in human and military affairs. The Allies possessed powers that were irresistible. Great Britain had the right under the Anglo-American agreement to be consulted on the next step.

"The decision to use the atomic bomb was taken by President Truman and myself at Potsdam and we approved the military plans to unchain the dread, pent-up force. From that moment our outlook on the future was transformed." Premier Stalin was informed by the President that an explosive of incomparable power was to be used. As to the Japanese, it was sought to induce them to surrender by giving generous assurances as to their future—"This we owed to our conscience before using this awful weapon." In addition, an endeavour was made to secure the evacuation of Japanese from the threatened cities.

"There are those who consider that the atomic bomb should never have been used at all," Winston went on. "I cannot associate myself with such ideas. Six years of total war have convinced most people that had the Germans or Japanese discovered this new weapon they would have used it upon us to our complete destruction with the utmost alacrity. I am surprised that very worthy people—but people who in most cases had no intention of proceeding to the Japanese front themselves—should adopt the position that rather than throw this bomb we should have sacrificed a million Americans and 250,000 British lives in the desperate battles of an invasion of Japan. Future generations will judge this dire decision and I believe if they find themselves dwelling in a happier world from which war has been banished, and where freedom reigns, they will not condemn those who struggled for their benefit amid the horrors and miseries of this grim and ferocious struggle.

"The bomb brought peace, but man alone can keep that peace. I am in entire agreement with President Truman that the secret of this bomb shall, so far as possible, not be turned over at the present time to any other country. This is in no desire or wish for arbitrary power, but for the common safety of the world."

Nothing could stay the progress of research in any country, but the construction of the immense plants necessary to transform them into action could not be improvised in any country. For these reasons the United States stood at the summit of the world. It would

take three or four years perhaps before the United States could be overtaken

"In these three years," said Winston, speaking with the utmost solemnity, "we must remodel our relations with other peoples in such a way that men shall not dare to fall upon each other for the sake of vulgar or outdated ambition, or for passionate differences in ideologies, and that international bodies by a supreme authority may give peace on earth and justice among men. Our pilgrimage has brought us to a sublime moment in the history of the world. All must strive to be worthy of these supreme opportunities. There is not an hour to be wasted, not a day to be lost."

Winston passed comment on various decisions taken after he had left Potsdam, in particular on the arrangements for the Polish frontier. The new frontier in the West, which incorporated in Poland one quarter of the arable land in all Germany, was not in his view a good augury for Europe. In the Coalition Government there had been a desire that Poland should receive compensation in the West for territory in the East conceded to Russia, but it was a mistake for the Poles to go far beyond what necessity or equity required. Then followed his epigrammatic criticism of the Polish people—"There are few virtues the Poles do not possess and there are few mistakes they have ever avoided."

He was concerned about the manner of the expulsion of Germans from the new Poland. Between eight and nine million people dwelt in this region before the war and the Polish Government estimated that there were a million and a half not expelled but still within the new frontier. Where had the other millions gone, what had been their fate? A similar condition might reproduce itself in the expulsion of the Sudetens and other Germans from Czechoslovakia. It was not impossible that a tragedy on a prodigious scale was imposing itself behind the iron curtain which divided Europe in twain.

In passing, Winston paid his tribute to the new Foreign Secretary. There had been a close affinity in the days of the Coalition between Winston and Ernest Bevin. There is a similarity of outlook between these two statesmen, men of action both, whose judgment of men and events is not determined by what, in the language of to-day, is termed their ideologies.

"I would like to say," remarked Winston, "with what gratification I have seen Mr. Bevin undertake the high and difficult office of Foreign Secretary. I am sure that he will do his best to preserve the high causes for which we have long fought together."

In the Balkans, Winston said, a situation was arising with which not many members of the House would be content. Almost everywhere Communist forces had obtained or were in the process of obtaining dictatorial powers. This did not mean that Russia sought

to reduce all these independent states to provinces of the Soviet Union. "Stalin is a very wise man, and I would set no limits to the immense contributions Stalin and his associates have to make to the future."

In the Balkan countries, torn by war, there must for some months be the need for authoritarian Government, to which the alternative was anarchy. In millions of humble homes in Europe, in Poland, in Yugoslavia, in Czechoslovakia, fear of the police governments was a main preoccupation of family life. One of President Roosevelt's four freedoms was freedom from fear, but this had been interpreted as if it were only freedom from fear of invasion by a foreign country. That was the least of the fears of the common man, or the ordinary families in Europe. Their fear was of the policeman knocking at the door.

Contrasting these conditions with affairs in our own land, Winston went on to make an appeal for the maintenance of national unity in the maintenance of our democracy.

"Surely we can agree in this new Parliament or the great majority of us," he said, "that the will of the people freely expressed in secret ballot as to the laws that shall prevail is the first solution and safeguard. Democracy is on trial as it never was before, in this island. We must uphold it as we did in the dark days of 1940 and 1941, with all our hearts and all our vigilance and with untiring and inexhaustible strength. Government derives power from the governed, says the Constitution of the United States. This must not all evaporate in swindles and lies.

"In our foreign policy let us strike a continuous note of freedom and fair play as we understand it. Then you will find an overwhelming measure of agreement between us. Just as in 1940, so now let us be united upon these resurgent principles and the impulses of good and generous hearts of men. Then to all our material strength we have acquired, we shall add the moral quality and make the weak equal with the strong."

No Parliament had ever assembled with such a mass of agreed legislation before them. He had great hopes of this Parliament and he would do his utmost to make its work fruitful. It might heal the wounds of war, it might turn to good account the new conceptions and powers which they had gathered amid the storm.

"I do not underrate the difficulty and intricate complication of the task which lies before us. I know too much about it to cherish vain illusions. On the morrow of such a victory as we have gained it is a splendid moment both in our small lives and in our great history. It is a time not only of rejoicing but even more of resolve. When we look back on all the perils through which we have passed, at the mighty foes we have laid low, and all the dark and deadly

designs we have frustrated, why should we fear for our future?" "We had come safely through the worst.

*Home is the sailor, home from sea,  
And the hunter, home from the hill.*

In this speech to the new House of Commons, Winston revealed once again the figure of the national leader which had been in eclipse during the partisan acerbities of the General Election.

Clement Attlee, following him in the debate, began his speech with a tribute to his wartime leader. He too was speaking not only for his party, but for the House and the people. He said :

"I think that, before I deal with the general policy contained in the King's Speech and with the speech of my right hon. friend opposite, which I thought showed him to be in most excellent form, there is a duty which I ought to take the earliest opportunity of performing. The surrender of Japan has brought to an end the greatest war in history, and a General Election, which took place at a time which was not of our seeking—has resulted in Mr. Churchill being on the Opposition benches at a time when the fruits of his long leadership of the nation in war are being garnered. I think it is fitting that to-day I should pay a tribute to one of the main architects of our victory.

"However we may be divided politically in this House, I believe I shall be expressing the views of the whole House in making acknowledgment here of the transcendent services rendered by the right hon. gentleman to this country, to the Commonwealth and Empire, and to the world during his tenure of office.

"During those years he was the leader of the country in war. We have seen in Fascist countries a detestable cult of leadership which has only been a cover for dictatorship, but there is a true leadership which means the expression by one man of the soul of a nation, and its translation of the common will into action. In the darkest and most dangerous hours of our history this nation found in my right hon. friend the man who expressed supremely the courage and determination never to yield which animated all the men and women of this country. In undying phrases he crystallized the unspoken feeling of all.

"'Words only,' it might be said, but words of great moment in history are deeds. We had more than words from the right hon. gentleman. He radiated a stream of energy throughout the machinery of government, indeed, throughout the life of the nation.

"Many others shared in the work of organizing and inspiring the nation in its great effort, but he set the pace. He was able to bring into co-operation men of very different political views and to win from them loyal service. At critical times, by his personal relationship with the heads of Allied States, he promoted the harmony

and co-operation of all, and in the sphere of strategy his wide experience, grasp of essentials, his willingness to take necessary risks were of the utmost value.

"I had the honour to serve with the right hon. gentleman in the War Cabinet throughout the whole of the Coalition Government, from the days of Dunkirk to the surrender of Germany. There are many things on which we disagree, but I think it right to take this early occasion, before we turn to controversy, to express the gratitude and admiration for his leadership in war which we feel. His place in history is secure and although he was no longer at the head of affairs when the Japanese surrendered and final victory came, this really was the outcome of plans made long before under his leadership."

The records of Parliament contain a no more generous and fitting tribute from one Prime Minister to his predecessor in office.

In looking back on the events of this century, it is impossible not to assign to the workings of a beneficent providence the good fortune that the two greatest war ministers of modern times should have emerged to lead the nation out of the pit of peril in this war and the last. Two things are common to them—genius in leadership and matchless eloquence. Beyond that Winston Churchill and Lloyd George are distinguished by their differences. In character and temperament, in their methods of handling men and affairs, in their capacities as leaders of the people, in their powers as orators the contrasts are more apparent than the resemblances. The impassioned Celt had greater fire as speaker. His words could lift the spirits of his hearers to the summits of his own Welsh hills. To the note of political passion he could add the religious fervour of a man inspired.

Reason rather than passion has given Winston Churchill power over the minds of men. The sustained arguments of his great war speeches were irresistible in their logic. Lacking the lighter and more varied tones of the orator of Wales, he excelled in command of language and his choice of the matchless phrase.

As Ministers, Lloyd George was more successful in dealing with men, Winston with affairs. No Minister of our times has equalled Lloyd George in his capacity for handling men. "He could charm the bark off a tree," pronounced Margot Asquith, and her judgment on the man who supplanted her husband may be accepted. Churchill is not so gifted, though with President Roosevelt, pre-eminently, and with Premier Stalin he succeeded in establishing cordial relations that contributed to the harmonious co-operation of the Allies. With his colleagues he established bonds of loyalty that are rare in politics and that loyalty was extended to the commanders in the field. Here the contrast with his predecessor stands out again. Lloyd George's antagonism to Haig and other military leaders is

notorious. Though L G. retained the admiration of his ministerial colleagues who remained with him, he parted company with others on terms of mutual and unedifying disparagement. Winston has been reproached for his failure to delegate authority. Lloyd George was prompt to assign responsibility when things went awry.

Which, then, was the greater figure? History will make her choice. We, who have lived in their generation, are not debarred from ranking them. In Lloyd George we see a Minister who rendered great services in peace as well as war, the founder of the system of social insurance, that has done more than anything else in our time to alleviate the lot of the poor and needy. As a man of war, Churchill is supreme. By temperament, by training and by experience, in the art and craft of war, he stands alone amongst ministers of the Crown. It was reckoned that the greatest service Lloyd George rendered to the state was in rallying the people in the dark days of 1917. At no time in the last war was the hour so critical as in 1940, when we stood alone and all but hope seemed lost. Britain has received no finer service than Winston Churchill rendered then. Well might he say, "It fell to me in those days to express the sentiments and resolves of the British nation in that supreme crisis of its life. That was to me an honour far beyond any dreams or ambitions I had ever nursed and it is one that cannot be taken away."

## APPENDICES

### *Mr. Churchill's Election Record*

OLDHAM					
1899	A. Emmott ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	12,976
	W Runciman ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	12,770
	Winston Churchill ( <i>Cons.</i> )	.	.	.	11,477
	J Mawdsley ( <i>Cons.</i> )	.	.	.	11,449
1900	A. Emmott ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	12,947
	Winston Churchill ( <i>Cons.</i> )	.	.	.	12,931
	W. Runciman ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	12,709
	C B Crisp ( <i>Cons.</i> )	.	.	.	12,522
MANCHESTER NORTH-WEST					
1906	Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	5,639
	Joynson Hicks ( <i>Cons.</i> )	.	.	.	4,398
1908	Joynson Hicks ( <i>Cons.</i> )	.	.	.	5,417
	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	4,988
	D. D Irving ( <i>Soc.</i> )	.	.	.	276
DUNDEE					
1908	Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	7,079
	Sir G W Baxter ( <i>Lib. Un.</i> )	.	.	.	4,370
	G. H Stuart ( <i>I Lab.</i> )	.	.	.	4,014
	E. Scrymgeour ( <i>Ind.</i> )	.	.	.	655
1910 (Jan.)	Rt Hon. Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	10,747
	A. Wilkie ( <i>Soc.</i> )	.	.	.	10,365
	J. S. Lloyd ( <i>Unionist</i> )	.	.	.	4,552
	J. Glass ( <i>Unionist</i> )	.	.	.	4,339
	E. Scrymgeour ( <i>Prohib.</i> )	.	.	.	1,512
1910 (Dec.)	Rt Hon. Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib.</i> )	.	.	.	9,240
	A Wilkie ( <i>Lab.</i> )	.	.	.	8,957
	Sir G Baxter ( <i>Unionist</i> )	.	.	.	5,685
	J. S. Lloyd ( <i>Unionist</i> )	.	.	.	4,914
	E. Scrymgeour ( <i>Prohib.</i> )	.	.	.	1,825

1918	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib</i> ) . . . . .	25,788
	A Wilkie ( <i>Lab</i> ) . . . . .	24,822
	E Scrymgeour ( <i>Ind</i> ) . . . . .	10,423
	J. S Brown ( <i>Soc.</i> ) . . . . .	7,769
1922	E Scrymgeour ( <i>Ind</i> ) . . . . .	32,578
	E D Morel ( <i>Lab</i> ) . . . . .	30,292
	D J MacDonald ( <i>N Lib</i> ) . . . . .	22,244
	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>N Lib</i> ) . . . . .	20,466
	W Gallacher ( <i>Com</i> ) . . . . .	6,681
LEICESTER WEST		
1923	F W Pethick Lawrence ( <i>Soc.</i> ) . . . . .	13,634
	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Lib.</i> ) . . . . .	9,236
	Captain A Instone ( <i>Unionist</i> ) . . . . .	7,696
ABBEY DIVISION OF WESTMINSTER		
1924	O W. Nicholson ( <i>Unionist</i> ) . . . . .	8,187
	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Ind</i> ) . . . . .	8,144
	A F Brockway ( <i>Soc</i> ) . . . . .	6,156
	J Scott Duckers ( <i>Lib</i> ) . . . . .	291
EPPING DIVISION OF ESSEX		
1924	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Constitutionalist</i> ) . . . . .	19,843
	G G Sharp ( <i>Lib</i> ) . . . . .	10,080
	J R McPhie ( <i>Soc</i> ) . . . . .	3,768
1929	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Conservative</i> ) . . . . .	23,972
	G G Sharp ( <i>Lib</i> ) . . . . .	19,005
	J. T. W Newbold ( <i>Soc</i> ) . . . . .	6,472
1931	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Cons</i> ) . . . . .	35,956
	A S Comyns Carr, K C ( <i>Lib.</i> ) . . . . .	15,670
	J Ranger ( <i>Soc</i> ) . . . . .	4,713
1935	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Cons</i> ) . . . . .	34,849
	G G Sharp ( <i>Lib</i> ) . . . . .	14,430
	J Ranger ( <i>Soc</i> ) . . . . .	9,758
WOODFORD DIVISION		
1945	Rt Hon Winston Churchill ( <i>Cons</i> ) . . . . .	27,688
	A Hancock ( <i>Ind</i> ) . . . . .	10,488

### *His Family*

Married Sept. 12, 1908, Clementine Ogilvy, C B E., daughter of the late Sir Henry Montague Hozier, K C.B., and Lady Henrietta Blanche, his wife, daughter of the seventh Earl of Arlie, and has issue: Randolph Frederick Edward, b. May 28, 1911, married Oct 4, 1939, Hon. Pamela Digby, eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Digby: they have one son, Winston, born Oct. 10, 1940.

Diana, b. July 11, 1909, married Dec. 12, 1932, John Milner Bailey, eldest son of the late Sir Abe Bailey, Bt., she obtained a divorce in 1935 and married Sept. 16, 1935, Duncan Sandys, M.P.; one son, one daughter.

Sarah Millicent Hermione, b. Oct. 7, 1914; married Dec. 25, 1936, Victor Oliver.

Marigold Frances, b Nov 15, 1918; died August 23, 1921

Mary, b Sept. 15, 1922.

### *His Offices*

- 1906-08. Under-Secretary for the Colonies.
- 1908-10 President of the Board of Trade
- 1910-11 Home Secretary.
- 1911-15. First Lord of the Admiralty.
- 1915 Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.
- 1917-18 Minister of Munitions
- 1918-21 Secretary of State for War and for Air.
- 1921-22 Secretary for the Colonies.
- 1924-29 Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- 1939-40 First Lord of Admiralty.
- 1940-45 Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.  
Privy Councillor, 1907.  
Companion of Honour, 1922  
Lord Rector Aberdeen University, 1929-32.  
Chancellor Bristol University, 1930.

### *His Books*

- Story of the Malakand Field Force.* (1898.)
- The River War.* (1899.)
- Savrola, A Novel.* (1900)
- London to Ladysmith via Pretoria.* (1900.)
- Ian Hamilton's March* (1900.)
- Lord Randolph Churchill.* (1906.)
- My African Journey.* (1908.)
- Liberalism and the Social Problem.* (1910.)
- The World Crisis* 4 vols. (1923-29.)
- My Early Life* (1930)
- The Eastern Front.* (1931.)
- Thoughts and Adventures* (1932.)
- Marlborough* Vol. I (1933); vol II (1934); vol III (1936), vol IV (1938).
- Great Contemporaries.* (1937)
- Arms and the Covenant.* (Speeches.) (1938.)
- Step by Step* (Articles.) (1939.)
- Into Battle.* (Speeches.) (1938-1940)
- The Unrelenting Struggle* (Speeches, Nov 1940-Dec. 1941)
- The End of the Beginning* (Speeches, 1942).
- Onwards To Victory* (Speeches, 1943)
- The Dawn of Liberation.* (Speeches, 1944).

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